Abstract

on

THE MAKING OF THE DALIT PRINT CULTURE IN UTTAR PRADESH 1913-1978

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Introduction

This study is an endeavour to document and analyze the evolution and development of the Dalit print culture in UP. I do not attempt to bring out the changes in the print use as Elizabeth L. Eisenstein has presented in her work[1] (for instance, the inclusion of *errata* in printed books; placing words and letters in piles according to alphabetical order; bibliography, copyediting, indexing, emendation; the sequence of corrupted copies replaced by a sequence of improved editions, etc.). I concentrate on those historical changes which prepared Dalits to raise their voices publicly against their exploitation. The core exploration seeks to examine the conditions and circumstances that enabled them to enter the literary world with their own print media. I have brought out the whole process of establishment of printing presses and their further development: the mobilization of Dalits in the literary public sphere, the construction of a separate identity and caste discourse through the mechanism of print.

This study engages with the period from 1913 to 1978. This is because in the early twentieth century there was a strong protest movement against the caste system in north India, which was pioneered by the Adi Hindu movement. Swami Acchutanand (1879-1933) was the prominent leader who initiated the movement in 1922. He was born in a Chamar family at Mauja Umari in Mainpuri district, UP in 1879. The remarkable development of this period was the publication of Swami Acchutanand's booklet named "*Harihar Bhajan Mala: Bhagh 1*" from Agra in 1913.[2] This is the earliest document coming out of the Dalit print media from the Hindi speaking belt. This movement played a significant role in opening up the literary world to those people who were so far totally excluded from its arena and encouraged them to establish their own printing presses and publication centers.

The other Dalit intellectuals who followed the path of Swami Acchutanand included: Munshi Hariprasad Tamta (1887-1960), Sundarlal Sagar (1886-1952), Babu Ram Charan (1889-1937), Jatav Vir Manikchand (1897-1956), Mahashya Bhikhulal (1904-2004), Dharam Prakash (1900-1972), Ramnarayana Yadavendu (1909-1951), Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant' (1921-1998),

[1] Elizabeth L. Eisenstein; The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, (vol. I & II), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979

[2] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

Rajvaidh Mata Prasad ‘Sagar’ (1928-2010), Guru Prasad Madan (1942) and others on the list of Dalit intelligentsia. In 1978, the BAMCEF (Backwards and Minority Committee Employees’ Federation) was launched by Kanshi Ram and other leaders of deprived sections of the society. After that, the Dalit print media came up with new trends in publications where the focus shifted on capturing political power.

Chapter: 1. **Educational Development among Dalits in the Late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries**

To attain a knowledge of their glorious history, the Dalits underwent a modern change: acquiring education. According to Brahmanical texts, untouchables were denied basic education. They could only undertake vocational training, which helped them to earn their ‘livelihood’. The arrival of British rule became a turning point in the history of untouchables. It was for the first time, after the destruction of their glorious civilization, when they were considered as human beings. The British government opened the door of knowledge for them.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, various government and non-government agencies opened the doors of the educational system for the untouchables and the ‘low castes’. The journey of acquiring education was not smooth sailing for untouchables. In the initial stage, they were denied admission due to pressure from caste Hindus. Although the policy was to stop funds to those schools where untouchable children were denied admission on the ground of caste, Government officials often took the least line of resistance, which was to overlook, to leave unchallenged or to find administrative compromises to educational discrimination against untouchable students. Many officials seemed simply to have ignored the exclusion of untouchable students by caste Hindus. However, Dalits were also provided with scholarships, special schools for their education. But, their numbers were not satisfactory. Nevertheless, there was a beginning in education for them. Christian Mission schools played an important role in imparting education among them. The Arya Samaj entered in the realm of education for untouchables to stop their conversion to Christianity. The Samaj was not free from the caste discrimination; therefore Swami Acchutanand left the Samaj and started night schools for Dalits. These schools were run with the cooperation of the untouchables. It is important that these

schools were not providing certificates or degrees which could help them to secure jobs but the very purpose of these schools were to awaken Dalits and to instill the feeling of self-respect and dignity in them.

Chapter: 2. **Evolution and Development of Dalit Print Culture: 1913-1933**

From the late nineteenth century onwards, a significant change took place. As Nandini Gooptu pointed out the untouchables went to cities for the search of work. This helped in the development of a tiny 'middle class' among untouchables in cities. They were living outside the social and religious pressure of village life. Therefore, they were free from their village counterpart. It provided a base for the revival of *Bhakti* tradition among the urban untouchables which encouraged them to think about the establishment of an egalitarian society and the abolition of the caste system.

To establish an egalitarian society, the Dalit intelligentsia found a 'unique' weapon: Dalit literature. The first generation of Dalit intellectuals was equipped with the power of writing and they started a counter literary discourse against the mainstream Hindi literature in UP. Swami Acchutanand, Babu Ramcharan, Choudhary Nand Lal, Munshi Hariprasad Tamta, Mahashya Bhikhulal, Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Dr. Gaya Prasad Prashant, Sundarlal Sagar, Ramanarayana Yadavendu, Jatav Vir Manikchand, Guru Prasad Madan, etc. were some of the prominent intellectuals who registered their presence in the literary public sphere. Through their writings, they tried to create awareness among the ignorant untouchables and low castes. These Dalit intellectuals came from diverse backgrounds but a commonality that united them was a feeling and understanding of their subjugated position within Hindu social order. All intellectuals were in agreement that communal rivalries, caste feuds and primitive acts of oppressions and suppressions committed by orthodox Hindus had been responsible for their degradation. Therefore, they began their struggle for establishment of an egalitarian society based on merits of human beings where they could live with self- respect and dignity.

Swami Acchutanand was the first Dalit writer in the Hindi speaking region. He initiated a campaign for the emancipation of masses from the stigma of untouchability and slavery through

his writings. Dalit intellectuals were in solidarity with the Adi Hindu movement which led to the beginning of a new ideological and literary discourse that guided them to imagine a glorious communal past and a united collective 'self'. In this process of imagining and re-construction of their history, they discovered their heroes in Brahmanical literature. It is important to point out that they took Brahmanical myths for an authentic history and re-interpreted them according to the needs of their movement. No doubt, they did so. But they were very deliberate in their selection, because of their awareness of the fact that it was only the Brahmanical texts which actually rule the low castes. Therefore, in fact, they did not have any other choice for a re-construction of their history.

Dalit intellectuals emphasized 'historical' themes in order to reclaim the 'actual history' of their 'glorious past' distorted by Brahmanical discourses, which could instill a new sense of self-respect and dignity in the Dalit community. They discovered heroes like Shambook, Eklavya, Bali, Mayanand, Raidas, Jhalkaribai, and Ambedkar to portray their century's long struggle for liberation from Brahmanical Hinduism.

Dalit intellectuals started the process of a new identity formation on two levels: socio-religious and political. Except for the Jatavs of Agra, Dalit intellectuals utilized their subversive literary discourse to create a new identity outside the Brahmanical framework by rechristening themselves as Adi Hindus. On the contrary, the Jatavs of Agra searched their new identity within the caste system and tried to rise within its framework. They claimed for the Kshatriya status and were significantly assisted in this endeavour by the Arya Samaj in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Chapter 3: **Identity Politics and Dalit Print Culture: 1934-1947**

On the second level, Dalits worked for recognition of their separate political identity. It is noticeable that despite various programmes of the Congress and Gandhi's championing of the cause for the untouchables no substantial change occurred in their situation. Dalits opposed the Congress and declared it as an organization of caste Hindus. Dalit intellectuals remained on the fringes of the nationalist discourse and it is important that they were not ready to accept the

leadership of caste Hindus and of the Congress for their uplift. To them the new Indian 'nation' was merely a fabrication of upper castes. There was no scope for the participation of 'low castes' in the newly formed 'democratic republic'. They were convinced that the nationalist slogan of 'nation for all' was a mere tactic of caste Hindus to confuse the deprived sections. Therefore, they intensified their literary initiatives to mobilize them for their emancipation from Hinduism.

In the Poona Pact, Dalits were characterized as a separate identity, distinct from the caste Hindus. Therefore, they were given some 'political rights'. But the Pact was not able to bring any substantive change in their political situation. Rather it helped caste Hindus to minimize the scope of the political development of Dalits. During the elections of 1937 and 1946, the Pact remained unsuccessful to protect the political rights of Dalits. Rather, as Shankranand Shastri and Purusottam Dass Kureel claimed, it encouraged a puppet Dalit leadership for the Congress.

However, the British government recognized Dalits as a separate element in the national life of India in the August Offer in 1940. Ambedkar and others founded a political organization, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF), in 1942. But the Congress and Gandhi never accepted Dalits as a separate element in the national life of India. Further, the Cabinet Mission also declined their separate status. As a result, the AISCF launched a countrywide Satyagraha in 1946. The striking features of this Satyagraha were its peaceful nature and the participation of Dalit women. It was claimed by the Congress that their Satyagrahas were the most non-violent in its nature. But whether it was the Non-Cooperation movement or the 'August Disturbance', they were not free from violence. The participation of Dalit women in Dalit Satyagraha confirmed that awareness had penetrated equally well among the men and women alike and that was the most important part of their movement.

In the 1940s, tension was increasing between Dalits and caste Hindus. We come across strikes by Chamars, sweepers and Kahars for an increase in their wages and better prospects of life. Shilpkars of the Garhwal region raised the question of caste discrimination by caste Hindus as they were disallowed to use *Dola-Palki* in their weddings. Along with, the question of temple entry has also discussed in the chapter. It came to light that this question was raided by caste

Hindus as a strong means for uplift of Dalits. But Dalits were not interested in temple entry programmes.

Chapter 4: **Proliferation of the Dalit Print Culture in the Post-Independence Era: 1948-1978**

On 15 August, 1947, India got independence. Very soon, Dalits realized that their real independence was yet to come. No visible changes could be traced in the casteist mentality of caste Hindus even after independence. Atrocities on Dalits were growing in so-called independent India. Dalits were poorly represented in the government jobs, private sectors, and the Cabinets. A feeling of dissatisfaction was growing among Dalits. This helped Dalits to intensify their literary movement. Therefore, we found that after independence, Dalit writers started emerging everywhere from small villages to big cities. It was the time when Dalit educated people wanted to pen their experience and wished to awaken and enlighten their illiterate and literate masses who had lived under subjugation since centuries. Therefore, ~~a~~ proliferation of Dalit print started to occur since the beginning of 1950s. In the second section of the chapter, some popular Dalit booklets were chosen to present the discourse within Dalit literature. These booklets dealt with political, socio-religious and economic conditions of Dalits. Along with Jotirao Phule, Ambedkar, E.V. Ramaswami Nicker, etc. were the major non-Brahman leaders whose work was translated in Hindi because of the demands and needs of the Dalit movement.

Chapter 5: **A Comparative Study of Mainstream Hindi and Dalit Print Culture**

I have compared the Dalit literary movement with mainstream Hindi literature. In the early decades of the twentieth century, upper caste Hindi writers, including Premchand, were praised for writing for the Dalit cause. It was claimed that they really wanted to accept 'unfortunate' untouchables into the mainstream. They wanted 'reforms' in the conditions of untouchables but they did not ask for real 'change'. They raised question of temple entry and tried to establish it as a strong means for their uplift. But soon, Dalits understood the 'hidden' agenda of this movement and they decided to abandon it. The writings of upper caste Hindu writers are reflective of their wish to re-establish 'values' of the Brahmanical system. Therefore, they never

asked for the abolition of the Varna order and inter-caste marriages, which Ambedkar considered as the way to annihilate the caste system. Their love for untouchables was limited to the removal of untouchability only. It is very strange that they were writing on issues of Dalits. But there were hardly any Dalit writers who published in their literary forum. As Guru Prasad Madan argues, mainstream litterateurs were full of conscious and unconscious prejudices against untouchables. At best, they represented Dalits as victims but not as agents.

The second section of this chapter deals with mechanism of print culture from writing to distribution of literature. It is worth noting that while writers belonging to the mainstream Hindi public sphere turned professional writers after some time, the case of Dalit writers was entirely different. Writing for them was in the form of a responsibility towards society. Dalit intellectuals established their own printing presses, started journals and newspapers, as they were not welcome in the mainstream forum.

Conclusion

Dalit print culture was very repetitive in one respect i.e. these are full of narratives of exploitation and deprivation of the low castes. It seems that the Dalit intellectuals realized that the primary aim of their literature should be to make their community realize the extent and nature of their exploitation and deprivation because such a realization is a pre-requisite of any movement for social justice. But at the same time, the centuries old Brahmanical cultural hegemony also limited the boundaries of their imagination. They could not but imagine their past and future within the ideological framework of the Brahmanical order. This was due in no small measure to the pervasive cultural hegemony of Brahmanical order. Therefore, in their historical narratives we hardly find any fundamental act of rebellion against the Brahmanical system. Their talk of the abolition of Brahmanical order was rather limited to the replacement of Brahmanical rule by the Adi Hindu rule. The king and subject relationship remained in place as usual. But there was a difference. The Adi Hindu rule was based on a democratic pattern; their women were considered equally important for the development of society and politics which was absent in the Brahmanical order.

Although the theory of the Aryan invasion lost its charm in the academia, it still has a warm welcome and relevance among Dalit writers who believed in the theory of original inhabitants of India as laid down by Acchutanand. To finally, conclude it can be said, that the Dalit print culture prepared Dalits to threaten the Brahmanic hegemony with their literature. It provided the base for their self-assertion, protest and mobilization. Further, it encouraged them to raise their level of literacy which was particularly low among them. After attaining education, according to Ambedkar, their aim was to become united and then initiate their struggle. Ambedkar said that "politics is not a matter of short cut. One has to take a long way to capture power."[3] The Dalit literary movement took a long time to spread awareness among Dalits and therefore, as a result, a Dalit finally captured political power in 1995 in the most populated state of India i.e. UP.

[3] The Leader (English, Allahabad), Tuesday, October 16, 1956, p. 5

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Dedicated

To

Maa and Babujee

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Introduction

Adi – Nivasi bandhu! Lijiye,
Yeh nij gauravmay itihaas;
Arya-dwijon ne swarth-vivash ho,
jise kar diya tha nash.
Padiye ise tham nij hiye ko,
dhariye man me bhari dheer;
Shok-Sindhu me doob na rahiye,
hariye nij janni ki peer. [1]

> Indigenous brother! Take your glorious history./ Which was destroyed by the Aryans for their vested interests./ Read holding it in your heart and keep patience in mind./ Do not remain in the ocean of sorrows, [wake up] and remove the grievances of your mother./[2]

This was the essence of the Dalit literature in Uttar Pradesh[3] (UP) in the twentieth century. From the beginning of the century, India witnessed a great turmoil in its political sphere. Indian masses started taking an active part in their freedom struggle 1905 onwards. Low castes also manifested a strong urge for equal participation in the 'freedom struggle' and in the making of the future nation. However, their notion of the freedom struggle was different from that of the Congress and other 'nationalist' organizations. They were seeking the freedom of human beings from all types of slavery: political, religious, cultural, social and economic slavery. For this, Swami Acchutanand started a Dalit movement in north India: the Adi Hindu movement. Dalits considered themselves as the original inhabitants of India. Aryans dethroned

[1] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 9

[2] Translation mine from Hindi

[3] Uttar Pradesh covers an area of the former princely state of Awadh (Oudh) and British Province of Agra. The Province of Agra was originally the western-most British possession, after they expanded from Bengal, and thus was known as the North-West Province. The North-West Province was renamed the Province of Agra, merged in 1858 with the Province of Oudh to form the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, known after 1902 as the United Provinces. In 1921 it became a full-fledged Province. After some time its name was again changed and shortened to the United Provinces. With the advent of Indian independence, the states of Rampur, Benares, and Tehari Garhwal were merged with the United Provinces. Finally, in 1950 the United Provinces was renamed "Uttar Pradesh". (Kshirsagar, 1994, p.402)

them from their kingdoms and reduced them as slave of caste Hindus. Therefore, in order to launch their freedom struggle, it became necessary for them to remove this feeling of slavery. In order to champion this feeling of slavery and to spread awareness among Dalits, we witness the emergence of a strong Dalit literary movement in UP in the twentieth century.

Dalit:

It is generally considered that from the 1970s onwards the term 'Dalit' came to be widely used in the public sphere. In that period, two Maharashtrain movements' achievements were prominently noticed in the English language press – the Dalit Panthers[4] and Dalit literature. By substituting the word 'Black' for 'Dalit' the reader can immediately understand that this phenomenon considered itself comparable to the American Black Panthers and Black literature. Like the American movements, Dalit Panthers and the Dalit literature represented a new level of pride, militancy, and sophisticated creativity coming out of the masses. None of the conventional words – Untouchables, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Depressed Classes, Gandhi's euphemism *'Harijan'* – has the same connotation[5] as the word Dalit that they themselves coined.

The term 'Dalit' describes a condition of being underprivileged, deprived of basic rights, referring to people primarily of 'lowly' birth and caste.[6] The word itself indicates an inherent denial of theories of pollution, *karma*, and asserts the existence of an unfair caste hierarchy.[7] John C.B. Webster argues that the word 'Dalit' was used in the 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of 'Depressed Classes'. In 1930, people from the Depressed Classes in Pune started publishing a newspaper called *'Dalit*

[4] Dalit Panthers, a militant organization was founded by two writers, Namdeo Dashal and Raja Dhale, in April 1972, already famous for its celebration of 'Black Independence day' on 15 August of the that year, the Silver Jubilee of India's Independence, and for its reaction to the violence against Untouchables or Buddhists in the villages. In 1974, however, the Panther leadership split, and with the prohibition of political demonstrations under Emergency in 1975, the organization plummeted into near obscurity as quickly as it had risen into the limelight. (Zelloit, 1992, revised edn. 2005, pp. 267-268)

[5] Eleanor Zelliot; From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement, Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1992, revised edn. 2005, p. 267

[6] S.M. Michael; "Dalit Vision of a Just Society in India", in S.M. Michael (ed.) Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007, (first edn. Vistaar Publications 1997), p. 108

[7] Eleanor Zelliot; From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement, Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1992, revised edn. 2005, p. 267

Bandu' (Friend of Dalits).[8] S.M. Michael claimed that the word 'Dalit' was first used as far back as 1931 in journalistic writings[9] but he did not mention the name of any journal. Jotirao Phule used the terms '*Moolnivasi'* or aboriginal and '*Shudra-atishudra'* to define the non-Brahmans.[10] On the other hand, Ambedkar used the terms 'Depressed Classes', 'Outcastes', and 'Lower Castes' but he never used 'Dalit' as a word to provide the identity for untouchables. In 1935, the British government used the term 'Scheduled Castes' for Depressed Classes.[11]

Later on, the Dalit Panthers revived the term and in their 1973 manifesto expanded its referents to include the SCs, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants and women. It included all those who were exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion.[12]

There is another aspect to the prevalence of 'Dalit' as a word in the Hindi speaking region in UP. It seems that the term was quite popular from the third decade of the twentieth century. It is found in the writings of the Buddhist and 'low caste' Hindi writers and government newspapers of the UP. Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer,[13] born in a Brahman family of Varanasi, later converted to Buddhism in 1914; and Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu[14], a low caste person, frequently used the term to describe untouchables and low castes. Swami Baudhanand argued that 'Dalit' described "those people who were oppressed in every sphere of life by caste Hindus and were deprived of religious, political and social rights."[15] The Arya Samaj also

[8] John C.B. Webster; "Who is a Dalit?" in S.M. Michael (ed.) Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007, (first edn. Vistaar Publications 1997), p. 76
[9] S.M. Michael; "Dalit Vision of a Just Society in India", in S.M. Michael (ed.) Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007, (first edn. Vistaar Publications 1997), p. 108
[10] Vivek Kumar; India's Roaring Revolution: Dalit Assertion and New Horizons, Delhi: Gagandeep Publications, 2006, p. 99
[11] Eleanor Zelliot; From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement, Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1992, revised edn. 2005
[12] Gail Omvedt; Dalit Visions: The Anti-Caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1995, p. 72
[13] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930
[14] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bharat Ke Adi-Nivasiyon Ki Sabhyata (the Civilization of India's Original Inhabitants), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1937 and his another writing Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941
[15] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 50 (translation mine from Hindi)

used the term to describe the Depressed Classes in north India in the 1920s. An all India level organization Shraddhanand Dalit Udhar Sabha, an offshoot of the Arya Samaj, was founded in 1921 in Delhi. Soon its activities were extended to most of the districts of the United Provinces, Punjab, Delhi, and Madras.[16]

The term was quite popular in government vocabulary which is reflected in a fortnightly newspaper '*United Provinces Review*'[17] published from the government printing press at Allahabad. It published a special issue dealing with the education for Dalits in 1934. There was another paper called '*Dalitodaya*' (Rise of Dalit) in 1934 but no information is available about its place of publication.[18] The term was also popular in the writings of mill workers in Kanpur. In an article entitled "*Chhote Aur Bade Ka Saval*" (The Question of Big and Small) written in 1938, Kashi Baba, a Kanpur mill worker, while discussing the nature of class deprivation, identified caste status as a significant element. He introduced the 'big person' as *Shoshak Chand* who is the oppressor and the 'small person' as *Dalit Ram* who is oppressed.[19] There was an organization to represent the voices of the Depressed Classes '*Dalit Mazdoor Sangh'* in Kanpur.[20] The mill workers in Kanpur, who belonged to the Depressed Classes, founded the '*Dalit Mazdoor Sangh*' on 10 March, 1934.[21]

In the pre-independence period, mainstream Hindi literature and media focused primarily on the 'nationalist' issues and the Congress. The movements of untouchables and low castes were usually considered as anti-nationalist activities.[22] However, they also sometimes wrote about untouchables. But they used the '*Acchut*' term instead of 'Dalit' more frequently to define untouchables. That is why "Dalit" as a term and the Dalit movement remained almost absent in the mainstream Hindi

[16] Home – Political, File No. 585/1927 (Letters dated 22 November, 1927 and 22 December, 1927 to J. Crerar, Esquire, C.S.I., C.I.E., Home Member, Government of India, New Delhi by Swami Ramananda Sanyasi, General Secretary, Shraddhanand Dalit Udhar Sabha, Delhi.) at National Archives of India, New Delhi, (hereafter NAI)

[17] United Provinces Review, 1934, a fortnightly newspaper in Hindi from Lucknow, published by Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, Allahabad

[18] Home – Political, 1934, Note on the Press: United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (For the Week Ending August 25, 1934), NAI

[19] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 143-144

[20] Chitra Joshi; Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and Its Forgotten Histories, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 255

[21] The Pioneer, (English, Lucknow); Thursday, May 5, 1938, p. 7

[22] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 40

media. Nevertheless, the term 'Dalit' was quite popular in the Hindi-speaking belt in UP since the third decade of the twentieth century. Thus, the claim for the revival of the term by Dalit Panthers in the 1970s is applicable to the western India only. There is no doubt that its meaning has acquired a new sense of pride after the Dalit Panthers. Earlier it symbolized the suppressed and the downtrodden sections of society only. Now intellectuals from the marginalized sections of the society described the meaning of Dalit in these words, "… Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the economic and social traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, Holy Books teaching separatism, Fate, and Heaven because they made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution."[23] I have used the term 'Dalit' interchangeably for the untouchables, the Depressed Classes, the Adi Hindus, and for the scheduled castes.

Dalit Literature and Dalit Print Culture:

I have used the term 'Dalit literature' in my study to emphasize the literature which was written by Dalits. This is an effort at documenting and analyzing the public sphere from the perspective of Dalits. Along with that, I also used the writings of intellectuals from the backward castes[24] and Buddhists who have made a significant contribution to the Dalit literature. They were deeply concerned with the Dalit movement. They were also victims of the discrimination under caste Hindus. Therefore, their position was not much different from that of the Dalits. Hence, these intellectuals realized the pain of caste discrimination and came together with Dalits in a common struggle for liberation.

I want to trace how printed material shaped the lives of Dalits. Dalit intellectuals started writings and they established their own printing presses. Print constructed a new culture among them. They started to 'see themselves' according to

[23] Eleanor Zelliot; From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement, Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1992, revised edn. 2005, p. 268

[24] There is a big population which are considered 'backward castes', however, these people are not the target group of this study. The target group consist the low castes and victims of discriminatory behaviour of orthodox Hinduism.

what their leaders expressed in Dalit booklets, newspapers, and journals. These 'instruments' were not available to them before twentieth century. Therefore, the new means of communication helped them in construction their 'new identity'.

Some Important Castes which Spearheaded the Dalit Literary Movement

The Chamar caste was most prominent and active among the Depressed Classes that understood and initiated the process of the making of the Dalit print culture in UP from the early twentieth century. Another important caste was that of the Mallahs, followed by the Jatavs of Agra and surrounding regions. In the initial stages of this development urban Dalits were on the forefront but from the 1950s onwards Dalits from the rural areas started making their presence felt.

The Chamars were the single largest caste in UP.[25] The word is derived from Sanskrit *charma-kara*, a 'worker in leather' and it is found in the Vedic texts. Chamars were actually found practising a variety of occupations in northern India. Their 'traditional' business is curing animal skins and shoemaking. However, large numbers of Chamars became field labours, ploughmen, and carters' grooms or migrated to towns, where they performed various menial jobs as unskilled workers. On account of their occupation and origin, Chamars were socially ranked even lower than tribes.[26] While discussing the status of the Chamar caste in the late nineteenth century, Nesfield stated that they were still field labourers, grass cutters, removers of dead animals, hide-skinner, and carrion eaters of the Indian villages. The *'rapi'* or tanner's knife was worshiped by this caste at the annual festival of *Diwali*. Their women served as midwives for Hindus.[27]

In colonial times, the Chamar was the '*Begar*' labourer. He performed various jobs like beating drums, blowing trumpets during a marriage ceremony or when cholera or other epidemics spread in the village. In reality, he had to perform these jobs as a '*Begar*' or unpaid labour. Sometimes he received wages in cash or kind, but

[25] R. Burn; The Census of India, 1901, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: The Superintendent, Govt. Press, 1902, p. 232
[26] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 169-191
[27] J. C. Nesfield; Brief View of the Caste System of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Allahabad: North Western Provinces and Agra Government Press, 1885, p. 22

more generally an allowance of grain per plough belonging to the family he served.[28] Their rites and rituals were performed by degraded Brahmans and not by the highly learned Brahmans because of their pollution. However, many Chamars joined the Shri Siva Narayan sect which was founded by Siva Narayan, a Rajput Thakur, at Bhelsari near Ghazipur in 1734.[29] Siva Narayan preached the worship of one God, who is truth. He preached temperance and mercy. There were in UP, in 1901, 46,727 adherents of this sect.[30] This sect was and is open to members of all castes,[31] but in recent generations the majority of its adherents have been Chamars and Dusadhs, a low caste of menials and cultivators in UP, Bihar and Bengal.[32] In this sect, all human beings were considered as equal without discrimination based on caste or birth. Therefore, it is noteworthy that untouchables were regarded with respect and used to eat with other touchable communities.

> "We have had *jotes* [land] here for years; our fathers and grandfathers were *assamees* here; our fields have not changed and we have paid (rent) at our rate, but we claim nothing; the *talookdar* is the proprietor of the soil, and he could have raised our rents or ousted…"
>
> Luchha, Kesra, and Purtab Chamars claimed in an interview with E.O Bradford, Settlement Officer of Hardoi, 1867.[33]

> "The fact is that the Chamar, just because he is considered to be qualified by caste to do the flaying of animals, does not necessarily become a primary producer of hides. The Chamar is largely an agriculturist like others holding land ranging between 2 and 9 *bighas* paying rent Rs. 9 to Rs. 51 rental, and

[28] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 190-191
[29] J.N. Farquhar; An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Oxford University Press, 1920 (first Indian reprint: Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1967)
[30] G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted 1990), 1920, p. 211
[31] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 188
[32] Bernard S. Cohn; "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste", in An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 262-263
[33] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; A Social History of "Chamars" in Uttar Pradesh, 1881-1956, Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Delhi, 2004, p. 65

> having as assets for grain he raises and precedes, he obtains from sale thereof."
>
> Note by J.C. Donaldson, Director of Industries, United Provinces, February 18, 1931[34]

Ramnarayan Rawat asks how we can understand the unusual claims made by Luchha, Kesra and Purtab Chamars that they have 'traditionally' been peasants and have ploughed the land generations. They justified their assertion by claiming that their rights over the lands, they cultivated, were based on the rent they paid to the zamindars. During a colonial inquiry, conducted in 1867, on the rights of peasants in land, Chamars made similar assertions in the Awadh region. Six decades later, in 1931, J.C. Donaldson acknowledged these claims when he described Chamars primarily as a peasant community. These statements not only identify Chamars primarily as peasants but also these raise questions about the colonial and caste Hindu assumptions which describe 'traditional' occupation of Chamar as leather work.[35]

According to the provincial census of 1911, only 1,30,233 (4 percent) of Chamar workers were engaged in their 'traditional' occupation of leather work. In the same census, out of a total 34,67,317 Chamar workers, including both men and women, 13,73,184 (40 percent) were identified as cultivators, including both *maurusi* (occupancy) and *ghair-maurusi* (non-occupancy) tenants, 13,55,387 another (40 percent) were described as 'unspecified labourers', and 1,42,786 (4 percent) were industrial workers.[36] This raises serious doubts about the prevalent belief that Chamars were 'traditional' leather workers than peasants.

The Jatavs of Agra and of surrounding regions are an untouchable community whose traditional occupation is leather work. They are also a part of the Chamar caste. In 1901, the total population of Chamars in Agra was 175,132. In terms of percentage, it was 19.13 per cent of the total Hindu population. Chamars were distributed throughout the Agra district. They were generally employed in agricultural and

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] The Census of India- 1911, Vol. XV, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part II, Imperial Tables, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1913., pp 756-762; Ramnarayan S. Rawat, 2004, pp. 65-66

general [menial] labour and many of them worked in the stone quarries. They owned no proprietary rights in land, but worked as tenants. However, as tenants they held a large area and used to pay high rents.[37]

The occupation of the Mallah caste was managing boats and fishing. Some of them were well off; they had boats of their own and employed poorer members of their caste to work for them. Their social status was a little better than that of the Chamars because they used to eat all kinds of fish and tortoise but not beef, monkeys, snakes, lizards, or the leavings of people.[38] Although the Mallahs were not included among the untouchables, they were treated as a marginalized section of Hindu society. The Mallahs was a sub-caste of the Nishad community[39], low in social status.

Scope of Study:

This study is an endeavour to document and analyze the evolution and development of the Dalit print culture in UP. I do not attempt to bring out the changes in the print use as Elizabeth L. Eisenstein has presented in her work[40] (for instance, the inclusion of *errata* in printed books; placing words and letters in piles according to alphabetical order; bibliography, copyediting, indexing, emendation; the sequence of corrupted copies replaced by a sequence of improved editions, etc.). I concentrate on those historical changes which prepared Dalits to raise their voices publicly against their exploitation. The core exploration seeks to examine the conditions and circumstances that enabled them to enter the literary world with their own print media. I have brought out the whole process of establishment of printing presses and their further development: the mobilization of Dalits in the literary public sphere, the construction of a separate identity and caste discourse through the mechanism of the print.

This study engages with the period from 1913 to 1978. This is because in the early twentieth century there was a strong protest movement against the caste system

[37] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Agra: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1905, p. 75
[38] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 460-467
[39] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 169
[40] Elizabeth L. Eisenstein; The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, (vol. I & II), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979

in north India, which was pioneered by the Adi Hindu movement. Swami Acchutanand (1879-1933) was the prominent leader who initiated the movement in 1922. He was born in a Chamar family at Mauja Umari in Mainpuri district, UP in 1879. The remarkable development of this period was the publication of Swami Acchutanand's booklet named "*Harihar Bhajan Mala: Bhagh 1*" from Agra in 1913.[41] This is the earliest document coming out of the Dalit print media from the Hindi speaking belt. This movement played a significant role in opening up the literary world to those people who were so far totally excluded from its arena and encouraged them to establish their own printing presses and publication centers.

The other Dalit intellectuals who followed the path of Swami Acchutanand included: Munshi Hariprasad Tamta (1887-1960) belonged to a well-to-do Jatav family whose occupation was agriculture. He started a newspaper '*Samta'* in 1934 from Almora. Babu Ram Charan (1889-1937) belonged to the Nishad caste. His parents were casual labourers. After the completion of the L.L.B. examination in 1914 at Allahabad, Ram Charan started his legal practice at Lucknow from this year. He started the first newspaper devoted to a sub-caste, '*Nishad Samachar*', in 1920 from Lucknow.[42] There were also Mahashya Bhikhulal (1904-2004),[43] Dharam Prakash (1900-1972),[44] Jatavaveer Manikchand (1897-1956),[45] Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant' (1921-1998),[46] Rajvaidh Mata Prasad 'Sagar' (1928-2010),[47] Guru Prasad Madan

[41] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[42] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer,; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, pp. 25-37

[43] He was born in a Chamar family at Ajuha Bazar, Allahabad. His parents were engaged in a petty business of vegetables. He had privileged to work with Swami Acchutanand and later on, he had written several books on Dalit identity and community re-construction. (Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), son of Mahashya Bhikhlal, Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am)

[44] He was born in a Jatav family at Bareilly. By profession, his father Mohan Lal was a leather worker. Dharma Prakash organized Dalits under the banner of the All India Depressed Classes League at Lucknow in 1935. He was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946. He started the weekly newspaper named '*Adhikar'* (1935 to 1940) from Bareilly to make Dalits socially and politically conscious. He started another newspaper called '*Manav Kalyan'* from Delhi, which continued from 1952 to 1962. (Kshirsagar; 1994, pp. 208-09)

[45] He was born at Rajamandi in Agra. He belonged to the Jatav community. His father, Bholanath, was a small contractor. He laid down the foundation of a 'Jatav Veer Institute' for the low castes in 1937-38. Still it is running by the Jatav community. He started a journal called '*Jivan'* from Agra in 1936. (Ramanarayana Yadavendu; Yaduvansh Ka Itihaas, 1942, pp. 238-39; Kshirsagar, 1994, pp. 230-31)

[46] He was born in a Chamar family of village Vidhishyama in Lucknow in 1921. His first booklet was published in 1940 entitled '*Dharam Kee Aad Mein'*. His another major publications were '*Baba Saheb ka Jivan Sangharsh*', '*Acchut Kaun aur Kyon?', 'Panchayati Samaj*' etc. (Personal interview with Dharamvijay, son of Dr. G.P. Prashant, (age 40), Unnao on 26 February, 2007 at 5.00 pm)

(1942)[48] and others on the list of Dalit intelligentsia. In 1978, the BAMCEF (Backwards and Minority Committee Employees' Federation) was launched by Kanshi Ram and other leaders of deprived sections of the society. After that, the Dalit print media came up with new trends in publications where the focus was on capture political power.

Historiography:

'Caste system' is a unique and a complex structure within Indian society that is characterized by inequality, commensality, hierarchy, discrimination and endogamy. According to Gail Omvedt, "caste is fundamentally a holistic, hierarchical system, which views the person not as an individual but as a functioning part of an interdependent system who helps to maintain that system by following the *dharma*, or duty, that birth has assigned to him."[49] Here, I particularly refer to the works of those scholars who studied caste discourses with special reference to the Jatav movement in Agra and the Adi Hindu movement in UP in the twentieth century, because these are relevant for my study. These movements prepared the ground for the evolution of a print culture among Dalits.

An early major contribution in this regard came from **Owen M. Lynch's** work[50] which is a sociological study of the Jatav community in Agra. His work tells us about their lives and the quest for a new identity. It is a significant documentation of the cultural and social transformation of the Jatav community in the twentieth century. He argues that Agra Jatavs are a part of a much larger group of castes known as Chamars or leather workers. In the traditional caste system of India, Chamars fall close to the bottom rung of the caste hierarchy since they work with leather which is a polluting object and are reputed for eating beef which is the most polluting of foods

[47] He was born in a Chamar family on February 23, 1928 at Ganeshganj in Lucknow. In 1948, he wrote '*Hindi Sanskriti Main Varna Vyavastha*'. His other major writings were '*Hamara Panchayti Raj*', '*Beef Eating in Vedic Age'* etc. (Personal interview with Rajvidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar' (age 79), Lucknow on 24 February, 2008 at 2.00 pm)

[48] He was born in a Chamar family on 5 July, 1942, in Ajuha Bazar village in Allahabad. From 1958 onwards, his poems were first published in a monthly magazine '*Utthan'* from Delhi and in the newspaper '*Bahujan'* from Lucknow. '*Sone walo Jag Utho'*, '*Ambedkar Aur Loktantra'* '*Jhoothi Aazadi'*, etc. are included among the major writings by him. (Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am)

[49] Gail Omvedt; Cultural Revolt In A Colonial society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India 1873-1930, Bombay: Scientist Socialist Education Trust, 1976, p. 36

[50] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969

according to orthodox Hinduism. As a group, Chamars are most numerous in north India, especially in the states of UP, Punjab and Bihar. The Census of 1901 showed them to be numerically the larger group of castes in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, while the Brahmans ranked second.[51] There are numerous sub castes (*Up-Jati*) among Chamars; the Census of 1891 listed 1156 of them.[52] The Jatavs are one of these castes or endogamous groups of Chamars, but they consider themselves separate from and higher than other Chamar castes.

The first generation of the Jatav leaders joined the Arya Samaj in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the process of Sanskritization[53] and Kshatriyaization[54], Jatavs spread the awareness and desire to accept a new mythological definition[55] of their caste rank and the means of legitimizing it. In this direction, a book '*Jatav Jivan'* (Jatav Life), written by Sundarlal Sagar, was used to justify the claim to *Kshatriya* status in 1924.[56] The writer made explicit the Jatav's denial of their untouchable status. He wrote, "*through this book we want to tell other castes that the Jatav race is one of the sacred and highest races and is not untouchable' (Sundarlal Sagar, 1924*). In 1942, another book '*Yaduvansh Ka Itihaas'* (History of the Yadu Race) was written by a Jatav lawyer Ramanarayana Yadavendu for strengthening their claim and legitimizing it. It is striking that the means of social mobility for the Jatavs was based on an acceptance and not a rejection of the caste system. The Jatavs were not attempting to destroy the caste system, rather they were trying to rise within it.

During the Round Table Conferences and the Poona Pact, a significant change came into their position when they associated with Ambedkar instead of Gandhi. The

[51] R. Burn; The Census of India, 1901, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: The Superintendent, Govt. Press, 1902, pp. 180-202
[52] G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted, 1990). 1920, p. 21
[53] 'Sanskritization' is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribe, change its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of high and frequently, 'twice-born' caste. (For more detail: M.N. Srinivas; Social Change in Modern India, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966)
[54] In this process, The Jatavs tried to acquire Kshatriya Varna status and denied their association with untouchable caste Chamar. They gave up the practices associated with untouchable status and followed the rituals like wear *Janau* (sacred thread) and acquire *Dhanush* and *Tir* (Bow and Arrows). (For more detail: Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969)
[55] An Arya Samaj Brahman named Swami Atma Ram had written a book entitled '*Gyan Samudra*' (the Ocean of Knowledge) around 1887. In this book, the origin of Jatav race has been traced from the *Gotra* of Lord Shiva and hence they considered to be as *Kshatriyas.*
[56] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 69

British government announced the Communal Award for the untouchables in 1932. According to it, the right of separate electorates was given to them. A separate electorate means an electorate composed exclusively of untouchable voters who were to elect an untouchable as their representative to the Legislature. Caste Hindus had agreed that a certain number of seats were to be reserved for untouchables to be filled only by untouchables. But they insisted that the untouchable who was to be the representative of the untouchables in the legislature should be elected by a mixed electorate consisting both of caste Hindus as well as of untouchables.[57] Gandhi responded to the Communal Award by announcing that he would "fast unto death".[58] Subsequently, a compromise, known as the Poona Pact, was signed. According to it the electorate was maintained as a joint one while the numbers of seats specifically reserved for untouchables was doubled.[59]

In 1944-45, a branch of Ambedkar's All India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF) had been opened in Agra by the Jatavs. It was a major turning point in the Jatavs' definition of their social position. This is because earlier they had claimed their affiliation with the *Kshatriya varna* and denied their association with untouchable castes. Now, their reference group of identification became the SCs: the oppressed and deprived sections of the society. These characteristics of the SCs became the basis of a new Jatav self–image which was a striking about turn from their march to Kshatriyahood. Further, Lynch claims, in post-independence India the Jatavs rejected Hinduism and its core, the caste system, as well as the Congress party. Instead, many of them embraced Buddhism and joined Ambedkar's political party – the Republican Party of India – in 1957 for political liberation.

A strong urge for identity formation is discussed in the work of **Ravindra S. Khare.**[60] His work deals with the life styles and the traditions of Lucknow Chamars in the 1970s-80s which argues that asceticism and social reform movements were prevalent in the three neighborhoods in Lucknow i.e. Modernganj, Baudhbagh and

[57] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables, Jullundur: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1943, p. 25
[58] David Hardiman; Gandhi in His Time and Ours: the Global Legacy of His Ideas, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 131
[59] Nicholas B. Dirks; Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002, pp. 268-69
[60] R.S. Khare; The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology; Identity; and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984

Karampura. While tracing the roots for a new identity he provided a useful account of the Adi Hindu movement. He says that Swami Acchutanand, a prominent leader of the movement, always stood for "just" protests and offered a radical rhetoric. His own life experiences were the main reasons for his estrangement from the caste Hindus and a driving force behind the formulation of his protests. While drawing out the characteristics of Swami Acchutanand, Khare argues that he was not merely a protester but most importantly, he advocated a profound reform of the entire cultural order that bred social discrimination. In this, he offered the Adi Hindu ideology to his community and reinvented their identity as being the original inhabitants of India even before the Aryans.[61] However, this work is limited only to Lucknow Chamars. But it also provides a glimpse of the caste discourse that was prevalent in the early twentieth century among the urban untouchables.

Nandini Gooptu's work[62] sketches UP urban politics on a broad canvas. It does not concentrate just on labour in factories but discusses manual workers in the *bazaars* (market areas) and in a host of small-scale manufacturing units; artisans and craftspeople; transport and construction workers; hawkers, street-vendors and peddlers; and service groups such as sweepers and municipal workers. These groups constituted the bulk of the urban labour force in most Indian towns, especially in those with few or no big industries. Central to this study is the nature of political consciousness and identity of the labouring poor in the inter-war period. This consciousness developed through the Adi Hindu movement, which evolved against a background of new social and political developments that affected the urban untouchables from the 1920s. Swami Acchutanand (1879-1933) was the leader and reformer of the first generation of the Adi Hindu movement. In this movement, the untouchables propounded a theory in which they presented themselves as the original inhabitants of India who, they claimed, were the Adi Hindus of this country.

She argues that the interwar years were significant for extensive urbanization, with towns developing rapidly in north India. Urban development was stimulated by growth in manufacturing industries and by substantial migration from rural areas that took place as a result of both increasing demographic pressures in the countryside

[61] Ibid., p. 82
[62] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001

from the 1920s onwards and agrarian depression in the 1930s.[63] Further, she has given a historical outline of the Adi Hindu movement and has pointed out the socio-religious discourse that was prevalent among urban untouchables in the interwar period. Their quest for political and basic humanitarian rights was on the forefront of their literary attack on Brahmanism. They did not believe in their upliftment within the Brahmanical framework. Rather, the radical theory of the original inhabitants became a bone of contention between the Jatav leaders and the Adi Hindu leaders. Adi Hindu leaders were more radical than the Jatavs as Lynch has discussed. They favoured British rule rather than Indian nationalism as it had provided them with several social, political and economic rights. They confronted the contemporary mainstream literary discourses and developed their counter literary discourse. Nandini Gooptu's work did not focus on the literary aspect of the Adi Hindu movement but significantly underlined urban popular politics, which was the driving force for launching a strong protest movement against Hinduism and for the formation of a new identity outside the Brahmanical framework.

The process of identity formation and the role of mythology in the construction of Dalit history can be observed in **Badri Narayan**'s work.[64] This is a study of myths and the reality of Chuharmal, a hero of the untouchable Dushad caste, who belonged to Bihar. It is a story of love between Chuharmal and Rani Reshma, the beautiful daughter of the local Raja of Bhumihar caste (an upper caste). Their marriage leads to a clash between Chuharmal and Reshma's father. Chuharmal defeats her father. The folk legend is a symbol of the victory of the Dushads over the Bhumihars. The manner in which the story is remembered by the Dusadhs makes it a constitutive element in their identity formation. Besides Bihar, the process of identity formation among Dalits in UP is also examined with a focus on caste conversion, which is used by political parties for electoral mobilization. Self-narrativesations are highly potent weapons for political mobilization as they contain myths that produce a collective memory and identity.[65]

[63] Ibid., p. 6
[64] Badri Narayan; Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2001
[65] Ibid., p. 12

In the realm of the Hindi public sphere, **Francesca Orsini's** work[66] analyses how a language and a literature became the instrument with which the contours of a new nationalism were traced. To a colonized people agitating for freedom, the one language – one nation concept of nationalism proved to be both powerful and seductive. In polyphonic India, however, such a single 'national' language had to be created, its power established. She maps the success of this formalized Hindi in creating a regional public sphere in north India in the early decades of twentieth century. Institutions and networks were set up to this end. Literary associations, journals, and schools were the settings in which a new kind of literary figure – the salaried intellectuals – imagined the nation, debated issues of reform, and acquired a political consciousness. Literature and history came out of this process transformed, and language helped draw political fault lines.[67]

Francesca Orsini shows how early twentieth century discourses on language, literature, women, history and politics form the core of the modern Hindi-Hindu culture that exists today. She also recovers the many voices written out of history, which were critical to the nationalist Hindi project. While talking about the uses of history to discover the new trends in literature, she argues that both the untouchable intelligentsia and the Arya Samaj used the nationalist historical narratives for their own ends.[68] She argues that rather than establishing a counter historiography both worked within the existing framework and only disputed their own place in it. It is correct that the Adi Hindu ideologues used the mainstream narratives of Indian history because they had no other alternative except this 'distorted history'. But gradually mainstream history had to be re-written by the untouchables for their future generations in order to make them aware of their sufferings as well as of a glorious past as kings and warriors themselves. Correct or not, this proved to be a rich resource for acquiring self esteem.

In the early twentieth century, a remarkable development occurred as a formulation of the new Dalit middle class in the towns of UP. This class consisted with the urban untouchable labourers and workers, migrated from rural areas. Chitra

[66] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002
[67] Ibid., p. 27
[68] Ibid., p.204

Joshi has provided a useful account of those labourers who migrated to towns in the twentieth century. The central theme in **Chitra Joshi**'s work[69] explores the struggle of workers to retain their past. The loss of factory work, the theme of rapture, of distancing from the familial world, was a theme that appeared in narratives of earlier times too. In the early twentieth century peasants and artisans looking for jobs in the city had to negotiate a new life within a new milieu, grappling with the worlds they lost. But in many ways the past still lived, inscribed in their present.[70] This work looks at the way workers struggled to retain their pasts – ties with the village, the family and community. Moving to the city meant both a fracturing of cultural worlds and an attempt to retain and create a new familial world. Migrants coming in often straddle both worlds – returning to the village for work and retaining and re-creating kin and family networks in the city in various ways. Work in the factory involved negotiation and conflict as workers attempted to create space and time for themselves, making seasonal visits to the village a part of the factory rhythm. The feeling of loss today, however, is fundamentally different from the experience of loss earlier. Today it is difficult to sustain any sense of link with the past, or hold on to cherished worlds. The loss now seems to have a brutal finality. With a whole way of life annihilated, the search is for new alternatives.[71]

Ramnarayan S. Rawat claims that no serious academic effort comes to us regarding the history of Chamars community in the modern period, however we find the sociological accounts of Owen Lynch, Ravindra Khare and other scholars. **Ramnarayan S. Rawat**'s work[72] seeks to trace the struggle of one 'untouchable' community, the Chamars of UP. His study inquires about to focus on Chamars' past and present relationship to agriculture, examining in detail their land holding patterns in different parts of UP in the nineteenth and twentieth century. His study seeks to revise the historical understanding of Chamars within the existing scholarship. Building on this foundation, he goes on to investigate the construction of multiple identities by Chamar organizations from the 1910s onwards. These constructions of identity all seek to challenge the dominant Hindu and colonial narratives of Chamars'

[69] Chitra Joshi; Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and Its Forgotten Histories, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003
[70] Ibid., p. 12
[71] Ibid., p. 13
[72] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; A Social History of "Chamars" in Uttar Pradesh, 1881-1956, Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Delhi, 2004

subjugation. He outlines the struggle of an 'untouchable' community to overcome the institutionalized practices of domination by focusing on the issue of their identity. While exploring the colonial assumption that projected a 'natural' connection between Chamars and the leather industry, he does not emphasize the role of Chamars' 'traditional' identity in the context of leather industry or the history of the position of Chamars as members of the working class. Instead, he investigates what he calls the *Chamarization* of the leather industry through which the fate of Chamars came to be linked with the fate of the leather industry. This study also outlines the Chamar's agenda for political and social emancipation as it developed from the 1920s through the 1950s. Chamars' organizations and activists were centrally concerned with strategies of liberation to overcome their 'untouchable' status. In this regard, he outlines two moments in Chamar politics, the first is the movement of Jatiyas (Jatavs) and Jaiswaras where they claimed a 'pure' historical past by asserting Kshatriya status equal to all dominant Hindu castes. The second significant moment within the history of Chamar political mobilization was marked by the emergence of an inclusive Dalit identity which included not only Chamars, but also Bhanhis, Pasis, Dosadhs and other groups identified as 'untouchable' by orthodox Hinduism. In the 1920s and the 1930s, Dalit activists began to assert that Dalits were the original inhabitant of India, a claim that included not only Dalits but also the Shudra castes as well as the Dravids of south India. He also focuses on the development of the Adi-Hindu Mahasabha and its transition to the Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942.

Dalit women played a significant role in the SC Satyagraha, 1946 under the aegis of the AISCF. They also played a crucial role in the revolt of 1857. Dalit intellectuals throw light on their 'forgotten' contribution. Generally, the historiography of 1857 manifested the role of upper castes only. **Charu Gupta** in her article[73] clearly points out this limitation. She critically analyzes the role of Dalit women not from political angle which Badri Narayan did. She is looking through the perspective of feminism.

Gupta argues that Dalit writers are attempting to look upon the mutiny as part of their struggle for freedom. The revolt has taken on the character of a Dalit

[73] Charu Gupta; "Dalit 'Viranganas' and Reinvention of 1857", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 19, May 12-18, 2007

resistance, where alternative Dalit heroes are represented as the real symbols of 1857 in Dalit popular nationalist consciousness. The rebel Dalit heroes - some constructed, some exaggerated, some "discovered" - have become heroes fighting for a free India. In these accounts, the armies of soldiers against British consist largely of Dalits.[74] Dalit literature on 1857 provides us a significant moment to examine alternative representations of Dalit women. Further, Gupta avers that it can be an important source of insight into gender politics from a Dalit perspective and a site of struggle over meanings. Dalit *viranganas* of 1857 included: Jhalkari Bai, Uda Devi, Avanti Bai, Mahabiri Devi, and Asha Devi. [75] Most of these Dalit *viranganas* have Devi or Bai suffixed to their names. They are also projected as highly moral, very "noble", super brave and super nationalist Dalit women. They are shown to be expert in horse-riding, swimming, bow-arrow and sword fighting. Through such portrayals, Dalits hope to garner greater respect, opportunity and dignity to these *viranganas,* and through them to all Dalits. Simultaneously, according to Gupta, this feeds into conceptions of masculinity. It also covertly challenges notions of Dalit female sexuality, and can be seen as a reaction to images of sexually immoral Dalit women. By shunning outward expressions of sexuality, Dalit women can also hope to build a space where they can wield more control over their bodies and gain dignity and respect within the dominant culture.[76]

Charu Gupta also points out the limitations of Dalit literature which is not written through the lens of historian and not based on historical records. But Dalits themselves are keen to prove the historical credibility of their *viranganas*, and constantly site sources from literary accounts, British narratives, archaeology and oral histories. They claim their works to be "scientific", "truthful", and "detailed". Histories of Dalit viranganas, who are simultaneously Dalit and women, stand as persuasive accounts, as histories from below, reaching towards their own "reality". They take recourse to recorded historical events and intermesh it with subaltern renderings of lost histories, deracinated by mainstream historiography. They are counter-histories of 1857.[77] While these Dalit *viranganas* are portrayed as "superwomen", full of bravery, and doing "impossible" acts, these glorifications and

[74] Ibid., p. 1740
[75] Ibid., p. 1741
[76] Ibid., p. 1742
[77] Ibid., p. 1743

celebratory accounts do not extend to all Dalit women in general. They offer a filtered vision, viewed through the eyes of the creators of these images. Victimhood is replaced by a new archetype of heroism. Although empowering, these images are not necessarily more representative of Dalit women. Simultaneously, there is an assertion of a super moral Dalit female subject perhaps also allowing Dalit men to police the behaviour of Dalit women in general. Some of these tracts appear didactic in their endorsement of certain patriarchal values. They are often replete with images of the loyal wife and an ideal mother. It may thus be argued from a Dalit feminist perspective that the emergence of popular Dalit male literature has not altered much the images of Dalit women.

Gupta examines that Dalit women too are now trying to use these images in multiple ways to their maximum advantage. Besides ways in which these symbols have helped build up Mayawati, many have used these figures to question representations of Dalit women in general, as well as their oppression and exploitation in real life. These images also form a part of feminist studies, as instead of focusing on just Dalit women's "victimisation", they point to their power and strategies of resistance, even though penned largely by men. Here Dalit women are actors and agents in their own right. They are transformed from victims into victors within the context of a narrative. These are not just stories of brave Dalit women but of all Dalits, of their legacy, of their bravery, of their pride, of their sacrifice in service of the nation.[78]

Badri Narayan's recent work[79] presented a trajectory of politicization of Dalits in north India. Villages, in his study, appear as a laboratory of socio-political processes which are constantly taking shape and are being reshaped in Indian society. He has selected a village Shahabpur, near to Allahabad city in UP. In the process of politicization, the small Dalit booklets proved a useful tool. The writers of these booklets are advocates, ayurvedic doctors, school teachers, etc. These booklets are sold in the political rallies of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Narayan's work is limited to present the picture of Dalit politics after 1950. He does not provide a history of the

[78] Ibid., p. 1744
[79] Badri Narayan; The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950-Present, New Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 2011

Dalit literary movement in detail. His focus remained on the process of politicization of the marginalized sections.

We have examined different works, which give diverse dimensions to the Dalit movements prevalent in the early twentieth century. One striking point is that the untouchables began thinking over their deprived positions. Therefore, there was a need for a separate identity, which could instill feelings of self-respect and dignity among them. Lynch impressively sketches the quest of the Jatavs for upward social mobility within the Brahmanical framework. Their claim for new identity as Kshatriya status remained the sole object of their movement. However, the second-generation of Jatav leadership also struggled for new identity, as SCs, in the transitional period (1942-47) of the freedom movement. Importantly, they did not want their association with the Chamar caste. Further, they started a movement for their due place in the politics of the 'nation'. Ravindra Khare also points out the cultural heritage of Lucknow Chamars which have significant historical roots for their present circumstances. While talking about urban untouchables Nandini Gooptu focuses her study on an assertion of untouchables for an identity formation outside the Brahmanical fold. The Adi Hindu movement played a significant role in starting a new counter literary discourse against mainstream Hindi literary discourse. Urban literate untouchables took the responsibility of making their brethren aware of the discriminating behaviour of Hinduism and showing them the path to emancipation. The evolution of the public sphere in the Hindi speaking region has been traced by Francesca Orsini. In addition to this, my work deals with literary discourses started by the Dalits themselves and how they disseminated their knowledge using the print media from the early twentieth century onwards in UP.

The importance of the evolution of Dalit print culture, which provided a strong foundation for literary discourse and dissemination of Dalit knowledge from the early twentieth century, has received scanty attention by these scholars. Against this background, my study is an attempt to bring out a coherent picture of the Dalit print culture.

The study is based on diverse primary sources such as, booklets, newspapers, journals etc. - written by Dalit intellectuals. The use of these sources aims to analyze Dalit perspectives regarding their problems, quests and struggles for the 'invention of community', self-respect and dignity. Besides Dalit literature, the study is based on other primary sources which comprises of the Census reports, the Annual Administrative reports, the Education reports, official files of the Home Department (public and political), of the Secretariat of the Governor General (Reforms), of the Reforms Office and the districts gazetteers of UP. Along with, secondary sources, in both English and Hindi, are also utilized for the study. The scheme of chapters in the study is as follows:

Chapter: 1. **Educational Development among Dalits in the Late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries.**

This chapter focuses on the initiatives taken by various agencies – government or non-government (untouchable–touchable individuals and organizations) to impart education among the deprived sections of the Indian society. The first section has explored governmental efforts which included the schools run by government authorities and by Christian missions. The second section investigated the untouchable intellectuals and their organizations and the Arya Samaj's role in imparting education. The last section throws light on the major educational centers for Dalit in western, central and eastern UP. It also analyses the discriminatory attributes which Dalit faced under these educational arrangements. This section further discusses how the discriminatory context of the education system transformed their thinking processes about their subjugated position in the Brahmanical social framework.

Chapter: 2. **Evolution and Development of Dalit Print Culture: 1913-1933**

The theory of Dalits being the original inhabitants of India was central to the evolution and development of Dalit literature in northern India. In this context, this chapter deals with various aspects of the theory of the Aryan race which the Dalits intellectuals had used to inspire their people against injustice by caste Hindus. There

is a discussion of different themes of Dalit literature which clarifies the picture of the Dalit print culture and politics of the Congress during the 1920s and 1930s. This was the time when Swami Acchutanand launched the Adi Hindu movement which advocated the theory of the original inhabitants of India and inspired the low castes struggle for their just rights and self-esteem. The central themes of discussion have been derived from the writings of Swami Acchutanand because he was the first Dalit author who laid the foundation of the Dalit literature in the Hindi speaking belt during the modern times. Further, I have also tried to map the process of re-construction of history with the help of literary booklets which mainly deals with the very famous piece of writing of 1930, '*Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya*' (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya) written by Bhadant Baudhanand Mahasthaveer. Lastly, chapters also briefly analyzed the question of Jatav/Yadav identity and its place in the Dalit print culture.

Chapter 3: **Identity Politics and Dalit Print Culture: 1934-1947**

Dalits emerged as an important political entity after the Poona Pact. The changed scenario witnessed the initiation of efforts by the Congress and caste Hindus for Dalit upliftment. However Dalits could not gain much from the new political equations. During the elections (1937 and 1946), the Pact worked 'against' the Dalits. Dalits could not get any space in the Congress Cabinets. From now onwards, Dalits started asserting their separate identity. In 1940, the Viceroy's August Offer granted them separate status. In course of time, the Congress and caste Hindus refused them a separate status. The Cabinet Mission also agreed with the Congress. Henceforth, Dalits threatened 'direct action' and they started the Scheduled Castes' Satyagraha in 1946. This Satyagraha played a crucial role in Dalit awakening. The effects of these revived activities can be noticed in form of strikes by Chamars, Kahars, Sweepers, etc. for higher wages and better lives. This created the reasons of tension between caste Hindus and Dalits. In the last, the chapter deals with the issue of temple entry.

Chapter 4: **Proliferation of the Dalit Print Culture in the Post-Independence Era: 1948-1978**

After independence, no basic changes occurred in the situation of the Dalits. Continuation of atrocities convinced them that it was not their freedom; that they will have to start another movement for the 'real liberation' from caste Hindus. This awareness played a crucial role in the spread of the Dalit print culture in UP. In this chapter, the first section surveys the continuity of harassment of Dalits by caste Hindus in spite of the Constitutional safeguards for Dalits. They were poorly represented in the government sectors. Therefore, a feeling of dissatisfaction prevailed among Dalits which provided the reason of the proliferation of Dalit print culture in UP. Dalit writers expressed their resentment in their literature.

Chapter 5: **A Comparative Study of Mainstream Hindi and Dalit Print Culture**

In this chapter, I have focused on the writings of mainstream Hindi writers dealing with untouchables and their conditions. The perspective of many celebrated Hindi writers, including Premchand, has been discussed to draw a comparison with Dalits writings. I have discussed various themes in the mainstream Hindi literature to analyze their sympathetic attitude towards Dalits which further attempted to counter the influence of the Adi Hindu movement. Secondly, it was an effort to incorporate Dalits in the identity of 'Hindus' to initiate *Shuddhi* programme. Gandhian notion of the '*Hridya Privartan*' was a dominant feature of their writings. In their writings, Dalits were not presented as agents of 'change'; rather their poor conditions and helplessness were major concerns of the mainstream Hindi literature. They did not presented them 'revolutionaries' which could have led them to break the 'thread' of their 'association' with Hinduism. The question of first Dalit writer in the Hindi speaking belt has been also discussed in this chapter. Besides this, the chapter comparatively discusses the different mechanisms such as establishment of printing presses, publication, distribution, readership, royalty, etc. used by the mainstream Hindi and the Dalit print culture.

Chapter 1

Educational Development among Dalits in the Late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries

Education is the means through which knowledge, values, skills and attitudes can be inculcated. It is a major tool for the socio-economic development of an individual and it is also a weapon to reduce socio-economic inequalities and facilitate political assertion. For the education of low castes, it was not a matter whether they were reading of the religious texts or mathematics, medicine etc. Here, the issue was the basic right to acquire education. A limited section of Shudras, especially touchable Shudras, had access to education but in the case of untouchables, they were denied even basic literacy. For example, amongst men, the most educated caste in UP was the Kayasths[1] which had only 3898 illiterate males in every 10000 (38.98 percent) and also the same time, the illiteracy rate among Chamars was 98.68 percent.[2] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the colonial government, Christian Missions, the Arya Samaj and many Dalit intellectuals tried to impart education to Indians. These initiatives held greater importance for the untouchables who were highly did not deserve education according the Brahmanical 'holy' scriptures. Therefore, there is an attempt to examine the initiatives of various agencies for the educational development for Dalits in the colonial UP.

Numerically, the Chamar caste was the most prominent among the Depressed Classes that understood the benefits of education and responded towards the Christian missions, the colonial government, the Arya Samaj and Dalit intellectuals' attempts for spread of education in UP. Another important caste was that of the Mallahs, followed by the Jatavs of Agra and surrounding regions.

This chapter deals with the initiatives taken by various agencies – government or non-government (untouchable–touchable individuals and organizations) to impart education among the deprived sections of the Indian society in general and the Chamar and Mallah caste in particular. The first section will explore the governmental efforts which included the schools run by government authorities and by Christian missions. The second section will

[1] Kayasths were included within Shudras but they were not belonged to the untouchable caste.
[2] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 262

investigate the untouchable intellectuals and their organizations and the Arya Samaj's role in imparting education. The last section throws light on the major educational centers for Dalits in western, central and eastern UP. This section also analyses the circumstances, in which Dalit intellectuals were educated. Further this section discusses how these discriminatory circumstances enabled them to start thinking of their subjugated position in the Brahmanical social framework.

I

Efforts of the Colonial Government

The British were silent for a long time on the question of promoting education among the native population. In 1813, it was laid down by the British Parliament that "out of the surplus revenues of India, sum of not less than one lakh of rupees each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of British territories in India".[3]

The history of government education in UP began in 1823, when the Agra College was founded under the control of the committee of Public Instructions at Calcutta.[4] The control of the educational institutions in the North-Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh was transferred from the Government of Bengal to the Provincial Government in 1843. At that time, the Province had three colleges at Agra, Benares, and Delhi and nine Anglo-vernacular schools maintained by government.[5] But the Depressed Classes were crestfallen as the British government ruled that education was to be reserved for the higher classes. The depressed classes were not allowed by the government to have their slice of education. The famous Wood's Dispatch of 1854 realized the need of educating the masses through both English and the vernaculars. From 1854 onwards measures were taken to impart education to masses of the country irrespective of caste and creed. But it was seen that although the policy of the government was of mass education, the masses were as out of the education as they were

[3] H. Sharp; Selections from Educational Records, Part-I, 1781-1839, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing Press, India, 1920, p. 22
[4] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 130
[5] J.A. Richey; Selections from Educational Records, Part-II, 1840-1859, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing Press, India, 1922, p. 226

before 1854 and that the lowest classes of Hindus still remained lowest in the domain of education. [6]

According to the Census of 1891 of UP, the educational condition of the low castes was deplorable. Amongst men, the Kayasths were the most educated in UP with 72.02 percentage; the Khatris were the next to the Kayasths with 48.32 percent literacy. It is noteworthy that literacy rate among Brahmans in UP was not remarkable. Only 17.95 percent Brahmans were educated. However, an untouchable caste like Dhobi (washer-man) appeared to be the most illiterate caste in the province with 0.25 percent literacy. The literacy rate among Chamars was 1.32 percent. None of the low castes had more than two literate persons per thousand; most of them had less than one. Female educational conditions were most deplorable. Again Kayasth women had high percentage but it was only 2.91. Female literacy of the low castes and Brahmans was almost negligent. Brahman women were very close to the low caste women in terms of literacy rates. Brahman women had 99.67 percent illiteracy and Chamar women had 99.99 percent illiteracy.[7]

Primary and Higher Education

The total number of the Depressed Classes' students enrolled in recognized institutions in UP has increased from 39,873 in 1922 to 90,816 in 1927. The increased percentage was 127.8 %. Though, the increase in enrolment has been satisfactory, pupils from the Depressed Classes were largely confined to the primary stage of education. In the table below, the numbers of the Depressed Classes (boys and girls) under instruction by stages and by provinces are given.

Table No. 1

Province	Primary Stage	Middle Stage	High School	Collegiate Stage
Bengal	3,10,398	8,787	5,996	1,670
UP	88,383	1,367	42	10

Source: Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, pp. 218-220.(This table does not include Depressed Classes' pupils in special schools.)

[6] Y. C. Rao; Dalits' Struggle for Identity: Andhra and Hyderabad 1900-1950, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 2003, pp. 62-63

[7] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 262

The table no. 1 shows that only at the primary stage, there is a substantial enrolment but at the higher stages, we find a sharp decline in enrolment. Colonial reports answered the problem by arguing that native people, especially the low castes, were unwilling to send their children in schools because their children could help them earn their livelihood. At the same time, it is also noteworthy to mention that sometimes the Annual Administrative Reports of UP claimed that the scheme for improving the condition of schools had to be postponed due to lack of funds.[8]

While the figures for boys studying above the primary stage were very low, the corresponding figures for girls are deplorable. The table no. 2 below shows the condition of girls of the Depressed Classes.

Table No. 2

Province	**Primary Stage**	**Middle Stage**	**High School**	**Collegiate Stage**
Bengal	28,086	49 (b)[9]	5 (b)	3 (b)
UP	2,204	8	1	Nil

Source: Sir Philip Hartog; 1930, p. 220

These figures show the appalling condition of girls belonging to the Depressed Classes. There is a sharp decline after the primary stage. Only one girl out of every 30,000 from the Depressed Classes advanced beyond the primary stage. Discrimination based on caste pollution was an important reason for unpopularity towards education among untouchables. Further, their prime motive was to earn their livelihood. That is why boys had to work as labourers outside for their livelihood. The condition of the girls, on the other hand, was more critical. One of the most formidable obstacles in the way of education of girls was their early marriage and they had to give up education without any choice. There was a common tendency of adoption of infant marriage among Chamars. The usual age to the East UP was between four and eight. It was very seldom that a girl remained unmarried after the age of eight.[10] The census of 1921 showed that 22,30,000 girls were married under age of ten, and 8.5 million girls, including 1.5 million Muhammadan girls, were married under age of

[8] Report on the Administration on United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1908-09, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Printing, United Provinces, 1910, p. 41 (We find the same type of information in the Report on Administration of UP for the year 1907-08, p. 49)
[9] (b): Include all backward classes (Hartog, 1930, p. 220).
[10] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 176

fifteen.[11] In these circumstances, girls' education did not get prominence among Dalit parents. They also generally followed the established social trends of child marriage. An absence of adequate numbers of women teachers and miserable conditions of girls' school buildings, were another reasons for poor status of their education.[12] Co-education was not popular and rarely existed after class II. The popular belief of that time was that girls should not be educated beyond the primary level, as higher education would lead their daughters astray. However, they were, consciously or unconsciously, like the upper castes. That is why, a significant number of high caste girls were not much educated for the same reason. There was a scarcity of jobs for untouchable boys and in these circumstances; there were no scope of getting government jobs by untouchable girls. This also restricted the education of untouchable girls.

The education of the untouchables raised the problem of their exclusion from ordinary public schools on the ground of caste. Publicly managed schools were frequently located in places which were entirely inaccessible to the untouchables. Whenever their children were admitted to the ordinary schools, Dalit students faced the maltreatment of separate sitting arrangement in the classroom or even outside the school building.[13] To find a way-out, government built up separate schools for the Depressed Classes and sanctioned grants to the missionary bodies to undertake the education for them by relaxing rules of grants in aid.

In the 1920s, special measures had been taken by the government of UP to promote education among the Depressed Classes such as the opening of special schools, remission of fees, grant of scholarships, and appointment of a special inspecting agency to assist the rapid development of education.[14] A scheme for opening special schools for the Depressed Classes was outlined in the local Government Resolution no. 1231/XV, dated May 23, 1921. These schools were institutionalized for providing education to the Depressed Classes without caste-based discrimination. That year also witnessed the distribution of grants amounting to Rs. 78,920 recurring and Rs. 7,350 non-recurring to district boards for this purpose. A scheme for further expansion was undertaken in 1922-23 when additional grants of Rs.

[11] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, pp.152-53
[12] R. S. Weir; Report on Primary Education for Boys and Girls in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh with Special Reference to Uneconomical and Superfluous Schools, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1934, pp. 51-52
[13] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 217
[14] R. Littlehailes; Progress of Education in India 1922-27, vol. I, Report, Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929, p. 245

15,000 recurring and Rs. 2,970 non-recurring were given. These grants were merged in the contract grant when the contract system was started in 1924.[15] Under the contract system of financing primary education government had prescribed a minimum expenditure to be spent by local boards on the education of the Depressed Classes, and a lump grant had been annually given by government towards the total expenditure under this head. District boards had been encouraged to open special schools for the pupils belonging to Depressed Classes, and these schools had increased in number from 582 in 1922 to 814 in 1927.[16]

In 1932-33, there were 757 special schools for the Depressed Classes with an enrolment of 18,443 Depressed Class boys. There were, however, 9,267 boys of higher castes in these schools. The average enrolment of these schools was 24 boys from Depressed Class and 12 boys from other castes. Against these 18,443 there were 88,282 Depressed Class children reading in ordinary schools, a ratio of nearby 5 to 1. It was pointed out in the report for the quinquennium 1927-32 that notwithstanding the increase on population there had been a reduction of boys attending Depressed Class schools and an increase of those attending board schools; 84 percent of the total number of Depressed Class school attendance were in ordinary board schools as compared with 75 percent at the beginning of the quinquennium.[17] The quinquennial report of 1927 pointed out that while the necessity for furtherance of education amongst the Depressed Classes continues as strong if not stronger than formerly, the need of having special schools for that purpose was diminishing. In many places it was now no longer so much the social disability which prevents the children of these classes from obtaining proper education as the economic difficulty. Interestingly, this report remarked that in some places the Depressed Class community was so poor that even with the provision of free education parents were unable to clothe and equip their children for schools. They were also unwilling to lose their services as child worker for some small remuneration. It has even been suggested that "it is necessary in some cases to compensate the parents for sending their children to schools."[18]

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[15] R. S. Weir; Report on Primary Education for Boys and Girls in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh with Special Reference to Uneconomical and Superfluous Schools, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1934, p. 55

[16] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 222

[17] R. S. Weir; Report on Primary Education for Boys and Girls in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh with Special Reference to Uneconomical and Superfluous Schools, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1934, p. 55

[18] R. Littlehailes; Progress of Education in India 1922-1927, Vol. I, Report, Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929, p. 245

An Education Inspector has remarked that, "the advancement in education made by the Depressed Classes during the last five years in the face of difficulties like poverty, caste prejudices etc. clearly shows that they are gradually beginning to appreciate the efforts of the department and the various Christian missions in the direction of educating them and thus lifting them up morally and socially. The facilities afforded by the department in the form of scholarships, prizes etc. have been chief instruments in creating an incentive for education among the Depressed Classes."[19]

In 1935-36, the Government had provided for Rs. 1,20,000 for the education of the Depressed Classes.[20] In the subsequent year, it was increased to Rs. 2,27,539. Over 4000 students from the Depressed Classes were awarded scholarships and stipends of Rs. 75,000.[21] Some of the scholarships and stipends for the SCs were included: Post-Graduate Stipend was for the period of 22 months and only four stipends of the value of Rs. 25 per mensem awarded annually. Degree Stipends were to be given to eight students for the period of 22 months and the value of stipend was Rs. 20 per mensem awarded annually. Intermediate Stipends were to be given to 32 students and it was tenable for two years and the value of stipend was Rs. 16 per mensem awarded annually. These stipends were awarded by the Director of Public Instruction of UP to poor and meritorious students belonging to the SCs. It was also mentioned in the Educational Code of the United Provinces of 1936 that the number of scholarships tenable in each district shall be determined by the Director of Public Instruction of UP on the basis of the SCs population in the district. There were some more stipends and scholarships for girls and boys belonging to SCs at High School for vernacular final, vernacular middle school, primary school and vocational stipends.[22] These stipends and scholarships indicated a generous point of view of government policy for the development of education among SCs.

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[19] H. Sharp; Progress of Education in India: 1907-1912, Vol. I, Report, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1914, p. 260

[20] The Budget, 1935-36: Discussion of Demands for Grants- Grant No. 13-31 – Education in Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, Official Report, Vol. LXVII, From 22nd, 23rd & 25th to 30th March and 1st to 6th April, 1935, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1935, p. 13

[21] The Budget, 1936-37: Discussion of Demands for Grants- Grant No. 9-31 – Education in Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, Official Report, Vol. LXXI, From 16th to 21st and 24th to 28th March, 1936, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1936, p. 177

[22] The Educational Code of the United Provinces, 1936 (Reprint third edition), Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, India, 1946, pp. 96-104

It is noteworthy that Swami Acchutanand enunciated seventeen demands in the '*Virat Acchut Sammelan'* in 1922 in Delhi. Out of these demands, one demand talk about securing the educational scholarship and stipends for the low castes' students. Further, the Congress was also trying its best to incorporate untouchables in 'national' politics. In October 1932, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was established for initiating untouchables' upliftment activities. Gandhi completed his *All-India Harijan* tour at Benares in July 1934 and he collected nearly Rs. 21,180 for 'Harijan' upliftment. This helped the Sangh to expand its activities. The Sangh worked for the educational advancement, instituting scholarships and for opening new schools and providing hostels and homes to 'Harijan' children.[23] This seems that the activities of the Congress might pressurize the Government to increase the amount for education. But we should also keep in mind that the Adi Hindu movement had a strong grip over low castes by this time. It is noteworthy that Swami Acchutanand and other Dalit leaders were strongly opposing Congress's efforts and politics in the name of 'Harijan'. Surely, Dalits were benefitted by the increase of educational amount for them and therefore, they conveyed thanks to the Governor of UP for granting Rs. 75,000 for Dalit students at various classes in 1934.[24] Rao Saheb Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta claimed that "Dalits had no faith in Harijan Sevak Sangh's educational activities. They did not consider it as a useful tool for their development. They were a bit satisfied with the Government's effort to spend Rs. 15 lakhs on Dalit education and Rs. 45,000 for scholarships to Dalit students. They considered, however, not much sufficient but it was better than nothing."[25] This also seems the increase of educational amount was like a step from where the Government would have to move forward, to sanction more amounts for education for the Depressed Classes in their budget.

The special schools were playing an important role of spreading education among untouchables. A few educational officers comprehended the inability of untouchables to acquire education due to their economic hardship. One Education Inspector of schools at Berar remarked that, "the grant of free scholarships to the pupils of these [Depressed] Classes reading in secondary schools is having but little influence on admissions, and it appears that these Classes recognizing that the present condition after the few openings to those of their

[23] Gyanendra Pandey; The Ascendency of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: Class, Community and Nation in Northern India, 1920-1940, London: Anthem Press, 2002, p. 57

[24] The representatives of Dalit castes submitted a memorandum to the Governor of UP regarding the educational developments on 29 November, 1934 in Lucknow in United Provinces Review, a fortnightly newspaper from Lucknow, published by Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, Allahabad, 1934, pp. 5-6

[25] A Lecture delivered by Rao Saheb Munshi Hari Praasad Tamta argued at UP Dalits' Education Meet in Lucknow on November 28, 1934 (translation mine from Hindi)

children who obtain Anglo-vernacular education. They prefer to send them to industrial work and their policy is sound; for the breakdown of social barriers is impossible until a satisfactory level of economic equality has been established among these Classes."[26] A similar type of unwillingness towards education can be found in the Census Report of 1911. There was a high dropout rate among students of the Depressed Classes after they completed their primary education because parents, in most cases, were never aware of the importance of providing proper education to their children. Parents took their children away as soon as the expenses increased or if the child could be useful on the field or at pasture.[27] But Dalits were unwilling to send their children to schools not because of the economic hardships alone. In reality, it was the Brahmanical societal set up and its traditional caste based occupational system which created obstacles for Dalits. If they gave up their so-called traditional occupations then it was almost impossible to earn their livelihood.

The Chamar was the most prominent caste to be educated in UP. They constituted the bulk of the labouring population, both in the field and elsewhere, and were extensively employed by Brahman and Rajput cultivators. Formerly their position was that of mere serfs dependent on the meagre allowance of grain provided by their masters.[28] In the late nineteenth century, the average price of wheat rose to 53 per cent, and that of barley to 49 per cent, of *juar* to 39 per cent, and of *bajra* to 47 per cent, an all round increase of 47 per cent. But the trader and grain merchant remained in a state of profit while the cultivator was not getting his fair share of the increased returns.[29] It was, naturally, more important for the cultivator and the labourer to secure the family income rather to send their children for education. Further, the average cash rate of agricultural labourers had undergone little change and ranged from the traditional rate of two *annas* to nine *pie* per diem, reaching up to ten *pie* in the nearest city in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.[30] Therefore, in spite of an increase in production, they were not given their real share of produce. The wages were still not sufficient for their family. At this point, education was not an option for them. This

[26] J.A. Rechery; Indian Education in 1919-20 (Report), Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1921, p. 20
[27] The Census of India- 1911, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1913, p. 324
[28] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Cawnpore: A Gazetteer, Vol. XIX of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, p.104
[29] E.R. Neave; (Edited & Compiled) Mainpuri: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1910, p.66
[30] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Cawnpore: A Gazetteer, Vol. XIX of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, pp. 70-71

clearly indicates that despite an increase in production, the system based on exploitation of the low castes was as prevalent as it was earlier. Dalits were not awakened and more importantly not in a position to raise their voice against their exploitation because they had no alternative to earn their livelihood. Further, this exploitative system was supported by Brahmanical religious scriptures such as the *Manusmriti*. The *Manusmriti* laid down the rules that the "A Sudra, even capable of earning money, must not accumulate wealth, lest in pride of his riches he might oppress a Brahman."[31] In these circumstances, the untouchables were not in the position to earn their livelihood through alternative means. Further, from the second half of nineteenth century there was not any movement, especially among untouchables in UP, which could make them understand the benefits of education. Again, the *Manusmriti* denied access of education to Shudras and women.[32] Therefore, there was an old tradition not to impart education to low castes. That is why the indifferent attitude of caste Hindu teachers and their classmates and the ill-treatment meted out by them to the Dalit students, which forced many of them to leave school. Swami Acchutanand also pointed out in his poem that "*Manusmriti* is burning them daily in every sector of their life, including imposed prohibition on educating the low castes."[33] Some British officers also argued that no large educational advance could be expected until there was a real improvement in their economic conditions. Much of their indifferences towards education were due to the depressing influences of poverty.[34]

It has been noticed that during the inter-war period, a huge migration took place from villages to towns/cities like Kanpur, Allahabad, Lucknow, Benares etc. These migrants were mainly from the low castes and the poorer sections of society. They were employed as unskilled labourers in small-scale and artisanal industries. These jobs, surely, raised their income. They were better than their village counterparts. At least, they had an assured source of income, though it was for a limited period. On the whole, their life changed in cities and they felt they were in an open environment in comparison to village. They also realized the need to educate their children. However, this was not easy as their employment was, chiefly, not only casual, but also prone to seasonal fluctuations. In the hosiery industry, for instance,

[31] Manu Samhita, (X, 129), translation in English by Manmatha Nath Dutt (Shastri), Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1909, P. 383
[32] Ibid., (II/36-37), p. 41 (Manu laid down the rule about *Upnayana Samskar* for only Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya boys only.)
[33] Swami Acchutanand; Adi Vansh Ka Danka, (Exhortation of Original Dynasty), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 3th edition in 1964 (there is no information about its first edition)
[34] G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted 1990), 1920, pp. 238-239

demand was brisk between September and February. During the period of low demand, many workers were out of work or were employed only part time. The number of workers was reduced during this period by 53.8 percent in Lucknow, 50 percent in Allahabad and 40 percent in Benares. The small-scale garment industry in Kanpur was characterized by a high demand for workers during the 'boom' period and the existence of a large surplus labour force of *darzis* (tailers) during the slack period, who were either partially or entirely unemployed and were forced to find supplementary work in other industries or as manual labourers in the bazars.[35] Surely, they were aware about importance of education and they sent their children to schools but in the first generation, there was not a huge admission in schools beyond primary stage. Their lives in the casual labour sector did not allow them to educate their children.

It is noteworthy that government reports (Reports on Progress of Education in India) also clearly indicated the unwillingness of caste Hindu teachers to serve in the low castes' special schools. To avoid difficulties arising from prejudice, a certain number of the low caste's schools were founded in most parts of India. These schools were not particularly efficient. There was a difficulty in obtaining teachers for them as high caste *masters* did not wish to serve in such schools. Their caste and religious duties forebade them to educate the low castes according to the Brahmanical scriptures. The Depressed Classes had not been able to produce enough teachers from their own caste.[36] This clearly shows that it was not only the economic hardships but also social and religious disabilities which were forcefully imposed upon the low castes. Brahmanical socio-religious injunctions encouraged the upper caste masters to create obstacles in the developmental efforts of the government for imparting education among the low castes.

Government reports on the special schools were contradictory. On the one hand, they claimed that the free schools were playing a useful role in imparting education among the low castes and on the other, they also pointed out the inefficiency of these schools. Further, it is particularly important that the colonial government was trying to discourage the special schools for the low castes as it wished to avoid any problem relating to caste. It was definitely

[35] Nandini Gooptu, The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 52
[36] J.A. Richey; Progress of Education in India, 1917-22, Eighth Quinquennium Review, Vol. I, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1923, p. 206

a departure from its earlier policy of promoting education without any discrimination based on caste and creed.

Since the third decade of the twentieth century a significant change took place which is reflected in the provincial administrative reports: there was a tendency to discard the special schools and encourage mixed schools where students from all communities could study.[37] The Indian Statutory Commission had strongly opined that the government should follow the policy of 'mixed schools'.[38] It is worth mentioning that in spite of the necessity for the creation of special schools, the number of the Depressed Classes' students studying in ordinary schools and the number of caste pupils studying in special schools for the Depressed Classes largely increased in several provinces. In 1931 there were 88,000 Depressed Classes' students attending the ordinary schools as against 25,000 attending the schools provided especially for the Depressed Classes.[39] The Provincial Directors of Public Instruction reported that caste prejudice was undoubtedly weakened. In many places [Allahabad, Lucknow and so on], it was no longer the social disability which prevented the children of the Depressed Classes from obtaining proper education. It was due to economic difficulties.[40]

It has been argued that the progress of the untouchables was rapid, and caste Hindu prejudice was slowly dying out. Reports were received from several places in northern India that tanks and wells being thrown open to the untouchables by caste Hindus. The difficulties in the way of admission of children to school were being gradually minimized, especially in the case of Madras and Bombay presidencies.[41] In an All Parties' Conference report of 1928, on page 59, it was said that untouchability is doomed and would die out.[42] But this was absolutely false and wrong. Acquiring education and trying to integrate with the mainstream was not smooth sailing. Violent protests against the iconoclastic educational system erupted in some schools. Public schools had been virtually closed to the untouchables. Both teachers

[37] R. Littlehailes; Progress of Education in India 1922-27, Vol. I, Report, Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1929, p. 245
[38] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 226
[39] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, p. 461
[40] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 227
[41] Robert Smith Wilson; The Indirect Effects of Christian Missions in India, London: James Clarke & Company Limited, 1928, p. 26
[42] Home – Public, File No. 346/34-Pub , Request of the All India Depressed Classes Association for the Nomination of three Members of their Community to the Legislative Assembly, NAI

and pupils made it difficult for the low castes to sit in classrooms. As a result, a significant number of 'low caste' people could not enter the schools.[43] Further, the government's claim that the number of caste pupils studying in special schools for the Depressed Classes largely increased in several provinces, has no meaning because only the enrolment had been counted and not the circumstances. It has been mentioned in the Census Report of 1921 that in a special school for the Depressed Classes, out of 35 students 25 belonged to the Bania (merchant) caste. The Bania students were deliberately enrolled in the special school, and not the ordinary school, due to the brighter scope of evading the school fee.[44]

There were many instances where Dalit children were subjected to discrimination on caste grounds. In 1912, Swami Acchutanand, in a school's inaugural function in Mainpuri, was shocked to see the untouchable students sitting on the ground while the upper caste students were sitting on a mat.[45] Clyde H.W. Tine, a teacher at Michigan University in America, visited India in 1922. He viewed that "the question of casteism is as prominent as it was earlier. There is no blow to the caste system… Its intensity can be observed during the marriage ceremony of Hindus."[46] Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant'[47] (1921-1998) disguised himself as a Sikh and as a Christian to complete his education in Lucknow because had he told about his untouchable background, he would have been thrown out of the school. But he was not fortunate enough to complete his education without facing the stigma of untouchability. When he was in class six, his Brahman teacher failed him after he disclosed his untouchable status.[48] In the 1950s, Rajvaidya Mata Prasad, Dalit writer and publisher, went to the outskirts of Lucknow city to encourage his community brethren to send their children for admission into primary schools, run by the Government. But he was tied to a tree and beaten up brutally by the rich members of the Muslim community. They believed that if

[43] G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted 1990), 1920, p. 238
[44] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p.118
[45] Swami Acchutanand sought donations from people from all quarters for construction of this school under the aegis of the Arya Samaj. His wife, Durgabai donated her only golden ring. Thus, he found that even the Arya Samaj was not free from caste discrimination. He then decided to part ways with it. (Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan, (age 65), Dalit writer and publisher in Allahabad on February 21, 2007, 5p.m.)
[46] "Bharatvarsh Ki Sthiti Par Ek American Vidvan Ki Sammati" (Opinions of an American Intellectual on the Position of India' in Sarasvati (Hindi Journal, Allahabad), December 1922, NMML, p. 378 (translation mine from Hindi)
[47] He was born in a Chamar family of village Vidhishyama in Lucknow in 1921. He was a Dalit writer and social activist.
[48] Personal interview with Dharamvijay, son of Dr. G.P. Prashant, (age 40), Unnao on 26 February, 2007 at 5.00 pm

the untouchables became educated, then no one would be available to serve them.[49] Here, it is very important that not only the caste Hindus but also rich and dominant Muslims feared the loss of their labourers. Further, opening of tanks and wells would have not been a smooth development since in this period (in the 1920s), according to Mr. Robert some tanks and wells were opened for untouchables in north India but when we look at the contemporary scenario, we find, in case of western India, there was a violent opposition from high caste Hindus in Bombay in 1927 when Ambedkar led a peaceful Satyagraha at Mahad to take water from a public tank.[50]

The claims of the government officers and their various reports give the impression that the government had intended to project only the gracious nature of their system to the untouchables. Therefore, we find critical comments and observations of the British educational officers regarding the waning of caste prejudices in Indian society. At the same time, the rules regarding the equal treatment of the Depressed Classes' students at par with caste Hindu students were frequently violated in the Provinces.[51] It was not so easy to eliminate the caste system, as government officers claimed, by a small literate group. Rather it seemed that the government run schools were very few in numbers and the special schools for the Depressed Classes did not meet the requirements of the growing population. It is noteworthy that special schools were not established in every village or towns. These were established far from villages or in a group of villages/towns and therefore, all Depressed Class children of village could not attend there because they did not had transportation system. Thus, this point is clearly indicated that government was not deliberately promoting its policy on special schools. School going students from the Depressed Classes were only one per cent of their total population in UP.[52] Consequently, the literacy rate was very low among untouchable communities. The population of literate persons to the whole number of males was no less than 55.8 per cent in the case of Kayasths, while the figure for Chamars was only 0.14 per cent.[53]

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[49] Personal interview with Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Lucknow on 12 May, 2008 at 2.00 pm.
[50] Gail Omvedt; Ambedkar towards an Enlightened India, New Delhi: Penguin, 2004, p. 30; Christophe Jafferlot; Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysis and Fighting Caste, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005, pp. 46-50
[51] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 226
[52] The Census of India- 1911, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1913, p. 143
[53] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Cawnpore: A Gazetteer, Vol. XIX of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, p. 184

Further, Hartog argued that all the provincial government have for some years ordered that the Depressed Classes' pupils should receive equal opportunities of entry and equal treatment in all publically managed institutions. But the figures for the enrolment of Depressed Classes' pupils suggest that these orders have not been strictly carried out.[54] The government's claim became weak when they came to know that the state-aided mission schools were objectionable to caste Hindus as they allowed untouchable children to enter the same classroom as caste Hindu students. In most cases caste Hindu students abandoned schools when untouchable students were placed in them. There were instances when government aided schools took discriminatory measures against untouchable students for fear of being abandoned by caste Hindus. At times untouchable students were allowed to sit at a distance from caste Hindu students. Sometimes they were forced by caste Hindus to sit in verandah according to their levels.[55] The verandah wall obstructed the students' hearing and vision of the classroom and was exposed to sun and rain alike.

Although the policy was to stop the funds to those schools where untouchable children were denied admission on the ground of caste, Government officials often took the least line of resistance, which was to overlook, to leave unchallenged or to find administrative compromises to educational discrimination against untouchable students. Many officials seemed simply to have turned a blind eye to the exclusion of untouchable students by caste Hindus.[56] Thus, the British role in spreading education was a characteristic mixture of the pragmatic, equivocal, calculated, and philanthropic motives with the proportions varying over a period of time.[57]

Role of Christian Missions

The Charter Act of 1813 realized the importance of education and permitted Christian missionaries to work in the Indian territories of the East India Company.[58] Christian

[54] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 226
[55] The caste prejudices were found everywhere and verandah system of education was also prevalent in UP in other forms of discrimination. Sir Philip Hartog has also cited references where untouchable students were not allowed to sit inside the classroom; therefore, they had to sit outside the classroom. (Hartog; 1930, p. 217)
[56] Philip Constable; "Sitting on the Verandah: The ideology and practice of 'untouchable' educational protest in late nineteenth-century western India", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 37, 4, 2000, p. 393
[57] R. H. Issacs; India's Ex-untouchables, New York: The John Day Company, 1965, p. 65
[58] S.C. Ghosh; The History of Education in Modern India: 1757-1998, New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd, 1995 (revised & upgraded edition 2000), p. 60

missionaries played a most influential role as educators in colonial India and their role became crucial as they opened the closed doors of education to untouchables. However, their aim was the anglicization of Indian culture and bringing people into the fold of Christianity by providing lessons in individual freedom, liberty, and equality.[59] The missionaries took the initiative for imparting education and to prepare the untouchables for higher walks of life. They believed that caste was the strongest obstacle to the spread of education to the untouchables. Hence, they adopted a new strategy to change the way of life by establishing schools, bringing social reforms etc. which helped the deprived communities.[60]

Some of the first mission schools were established in the Bombay Presidency, Bengal, and the Punjab. During this period, missionaries pointed out the utility of western scholarship as an ally against Indian religions.[61] 'Low caste' Hindus sought to use missionary education (and conversion) as a form of protest against caste structures.[62] By the end of the nineteenth century, nearly twenty mission societies were established in the Hindi speaking belt.

The Baptist Missionary Society of London: it was founded in 1797 in London and started its activities in Agra from 1811. They allowed individual conversion and endeavoured to reach all Classes and all generations. They maintained a high school and four elementary schools for boys in Agra. One of its associates, the ***Baptist Zenana Mission*** maintained four girls' schools in UP. Along with that they also emphasized the individual's conversion in general but specifically among upper castes.[63] The idea was to catch people from the upper castes especially from Brahmans. They thought if Brahmans would convert, the other low caste Hindus would follow them.

***Methodist Episcopal Church*:** It was founded in 1893 in America and its activities were spread all over the world. In India, two branches opened under the caption of the North India Conference Works in Rohilakhand, Oudh, and Kumaun; another was the North Western India

[59] Badri Narayan; Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2006, p. 51
[60] Y.C. Rao; Writing Dalit History and Other Essay, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 2007, p. 29
[61] H. J. A. Bellenoit; "Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, 1880–1915", Modern Asian Studies, 41, 2 , 2007, pp. 369-370
[62] Philip Constable; "Sitting on the Verandah: The ideology and practice of 'untouchable' educational protest in late nineteenth-century western India", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 37, 4, 2000, p. 385
[63] The Census of India- 1911, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1913, p. 146

Conference Works in Allahabad, Agra, and Meerut. The North India Conference Works had 327 vernacular boys' school with 5173 students, 144 vernacular girls' school with 2273 students, 17 European and Anglo-vernacular boys' schools with 3183 pupils and 15 girls' schools with 1517 pupils: a total enrolment of 12146 students in 503 schools, besides 1180 Sunday schools with 47680 students in 1911. It is often said of this Mission that it dealt chiefly with the low castes.[64]

There were some other missionary societies like the Church Missionary Society founded in 1813, London Missionary Society (1820-24) and the Salvation Army (1908) which worked for different objectives in different districts of UP.[65] Though there were no clear indications about the education of untouchables, yet these missions provided education without caste based discrimination. It was widely noticed that Christian instruction was objectionable to caste Hindus as it not only allowed education to untouchables but also allowed them to enter the same classrooms as caste Hindu students.

According to the government rules the ordinary government schools were open to all classes alike, irrespective of caste, creed, or race. But as a matter of fact outcastes were not admitted easily in these schools. Whitehead Henry remembered a village where a Christian of outcaste origin had the courage to assert his right to send his son to the village school where headmaster was a Brahman. The boy was admitted to the school, entered on the rolls and then made to sit under a tree in the compound, while the caste Hindu boys received their instructions in the schoolhouse. Even in mission schools, it has often been difficult to maintain the rights of Christian boys of outcaste origin to attend the classes and sit by the side of the other students.[66] In these circumstances, the task of education for untouchable students was not easy and there were fewer resources to support them.

The greatest prevalence of literacy (481 males and 318 females per 1000 persons) was found amongst Christians. However separate figures are not available for native Christians but Burn mentioned that the mission which had obtained the largest number of converts had

[64] Ibid., p. 147
[65] Ibid., pp. 146-148
[66] Henry Whitehead D.D.; Indian Problems in Religion, Education, Politics, London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1924, pp. 187-88

recently been compelled by want of funds to close many of its schools.[67] Despite the financial problem, Mission schools were major institutions where especially untouchable children got educated.

The missions, by providing education, medical and other social service activities to the Depressed Classes, not only benefited them but also revealed to caste Hindus that they had neglected their own people. Through this process, the missionaries introduced Indians to the humanistic side of western civilization.[68] According to Brahmanism, the untouchables were forced to live outside the villages and they could enter into villages at specific time because of 'pollution'. It was for the first time in the history of untouchables that they were considered as human beings rather than treated like animals in Brahmanical social set up. This 'respect' was not given by their Indian caste Hindus but by the Christian missions. Although, the missionary aim was to increase their base in India but their respect for untouchables can be seen as a 'social revolution'.

The work of Christian missionaries brought about an amelioration in Dalits' conditions in many significant ways. First, those who converted to Christianity got a new social standing as Christians. Second, those who remained within the fold of Brahmanism began to realise that the dogma of untouchability, which for so long had justified their miserable condition was false, and that it was not upheld by the missionaries, stimulated the Hindu socio-religious reformers to bring about the social education of the Dalits so as to reform Brahmanism and to prevent them from embracing other religions like Christianity and Islam.[69] There was another aspect of educational development which can be noticed in the growth of the Adi Hindu movement in the early twentieth century which claimed that the low castes had a golden past and they were the original inhabitants of India. Swami Acchutanand was influenced by the missionary education. He argued that untouchables should send their children to the mission's schools. But he was against their conversion to Christianity because then they would lose their identity and cultural heritage as Adi Hindus.[70]

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[67] H.H. Risley; The Census of India, 1901, Part I, Report, Calcutta: The Superintendent, Govt. Press, 1902, p. 175

[68] Y. C. Rao; Dalits' Struggle for Identity: Andhra and Hyderabad 1900-1950, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 2003, p. 71

[69] Ibid.

[70] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

II

Contributions of the Arya Samaj

"The primary object of education, according to the Arya Samaj, was to weld together the educated and uneducated masses by encouraging study of the national language and vernaculars; to spread a knowledge of moral and spiritual truths by insisting on the study of classical Sanskrit; to assist the formation of sound and energetic habits by regulated mode of living; to encourage sound acquaintance with English literature and to afford a stimulus to the material progress of the country by spreading a knowledge of the political and applied sciences."[71] The Arya Samaj used the educational development of the low castes as a means to stop their conversion to Christianity and Islam. The Samaj made constructive contributions in the spread of education among the low castes. It established schools in various parts of UP. However, these initiatives were isolated, the Arya Samaj was confined largely to those communities where other religious bodies already began to work; it entered into these places to a considerable extent as an obstructionist.[72] In fact, there was a state of uneasiness in the late nineteenth century when the rate of conversion to Christianity increased to 3000 per cent in Punjab from 253 in 1881 to 9711 in 1891. The Samaj and other Hindu leaders found themselves face-to-face with the possibility of losing all Hindu outcastes.[73] Therefore, they demanded more time to establish educational institutions to keep the low castes within the Brahmanical framework.

The Arya Samaj's principal educational institutions were the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore and the Anglo-Vedic school at Meerut, a large orphanage at Bareilly, smaller ones at Allahabad and Cawnpore, and a number of primary schools. It employed a body of travelling teachers or *updeshaks* to make conversions. During the famine of 1900, they took charge of many famine orphans in order to prevent them from being handed over to

[71] Kenneth W. Jones; Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1976, p. 72

[72] G.W. Briggs argues that the Arya Samaj's initiative for uplift of Dalits were as an obstructionist because the Samaj wanted to keep the low castes in the realm of Hinduism and it was against their conversion to Christianity. G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted 1990), 1920, p. 237

[73] Kenneth W. Jones; Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1976, pp. 144-145

Christian missionaries.[74] To impart education on ancient Vedic lines, the Samaj had established no less than nine *gurukuls* for boys and two for girls, where Sanskrit was the chief language taught.[75] But it seemed that these *gurukuls* were not open, actually, for untouchables because they were not allowed to study Sanskrit and the Vedas in Hindu religious system. Therefore, the Samaj had opened 43 schools in UP for the education of the children of untouchables wherein 1296 boys and 147 girls were receiving education.[76] Moreover, it opened schools in Agra for the Jatav community which was assisted by the Arya Samaj in the search for upward social mobility within the Hindu social order from the Jatav to the Kshatriya Varna.[77]

In February 1907, a free night school was opened for the instruction of pupils of all classes in English, Hindi and mathematics. It had some forty boys on the roll then, and received a monthly grant in aid from the municipality. The Samaj possessed a library also. The Cawnpore society was a strong supporter of the *gurukul* near Hardwar, and had made large contributions.[78] But it is not clear whether this school was for untouchables also and what was their prime motive behind opening the night school instead of a full time school which could have been more beneficial for the untouchables as it could provide them with a degree, qualifying them for a job. The idea of opening the night school was later on utilized by Swami Acchutanand with clear objectives (however he had limited resources which will be discussed later). The Samaj's school was aided by the municipality, so it could have utilized its resources properly to impart education in a large scale.

The Shraddhanand Dalit Udhar Sabha, Delhi, an Arya Samaj organization, opened thirty-two schools in Bareilly, sixteen in Bulandshahar, four in Meerut, four in Aligarh, one in Mattura for educational development of the Depressed Classes in 1920s.[79] Thus, the Arya Samaj played an important role for educational development of the Depressed Classes.

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[74] R. V. Russell; The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol. I, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1916, p. 206

[75] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, p. 506

[76] Ibid., p. 507

[77] Sundarlal Sagar; Yadav Jivan, Bhag 1, 2 (the Life of Yadavs, Part 1 & 2),Agra: Shri Jatav Mahasabha, 1929, p. 5

[78] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Cawnpore: A Gazetteer, Vol. XIX of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, p. 124

[79] Home – Public, File No. 585/1927, (A letter dated 22 December, 1927 to J. Crerar, Esquire, C.S.I., C.I.E., Home Member, Government of India, New Delhi by Swami Ramananda Sanyasi, General Secretary, Shraddhanand Dalit Udhar Sabha, Delhi.), NAI

Interestingly, the Arya Samaj had certain objectives and goals. Some of these were as follows: first, to stop their conversion to the Christianity. The second was to strengthen the religious base of Hinduism. The third was political motivation where they argued against the Adi Hindu movement.

Initiatives by Dalit Intellectuals

Dalit consciousness originated from the acute discontent. This widespread feeling was manifested through several organizations and struggles for the emancipation of Dalits. Many social revolutionaries in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries directed their efforts primarily towards regaining the right to education for the total emancipation of Dalits. There were some pioneering attempts made by intellectuals from the Depressed Classes. Jotirao Phule (1826-1890) was a pioneer of 'low caste' education in western India. He started a separate school for untouchable children as early as 1851 in the Marathi speaking area of the Bombay Presidency.[80] In 1856 the number of such schools rose to three and the number of students became 300. In 1858, he opened a hostel for poor untouchable students in Pune, where 25-30 students were accommodated every year. He propounded the necessity of a modern education and the acquisition of scientific knowledge, emphasizing upon education as a weapon to bring about a cultural revolution. On 19th October 1882, Jotirao Phule submitted a memorandum to the Education Commission, Bombay, headed by Mr. Hunter in which he requested the government to make primary education compulsory for the children of the untouchables. Further, he advocated separate schools for them as they were not allowed to sit along with caste Hindus. Since 1883, separate schools were opened for the students of the untouchables in the Baroda state.[81]

The untouchables were considered superstitious and backward in the traditional Indian social system. It was noticed that "the ordinary Chamar believed that disease, death and all troubles are due to demonical influence. When a person fell ill a sorcerer (*ojha*) was called in, and he pointed out the particular evil spirit which is responsible for the mischief and the appropriate sacrifice by means if which he can be appeased."[82] Therefore, it was the

[80] Dhananjay Keer; Dr. Ambedkar: Life & Mission, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1954, p. 4
[81] Ibid.
[82] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 189

foremost condition for Dalit intellectuals to get rid of such superstitions. Swami Acchutanand raised this problem many times through his writings and encouraged them for education and also made them understand that only education could make them contribute for the betterment of their community and of their nation at large.

> *Jis jivan mein Jati hetu upkar nahi hai,*
> *Jo jan janma kiya Jati hit pyar nahi hai.*
> *Jo tan-man-dhan se karta uddhar nahi hai,*
> *Kya 'Harihar' vo purush bhumi par bhar nahi hai?*
> Swami Acchutanand[83]
>
> A life which is not benevolent towards its own caste (nation)/ Those people who don't love the caste in which they are born/ he who doesn't work sincerely for the upliftment of his people/ Oh 'Harihar' isn't that person a burden on this earth?[84]

In these lines, by *Jati* Swami Acchutanand meant *Quam* or nation. He calls every human being to serve his or her country in every possible way. This visionary thought encouraged the Depressed Classes to contribute to the progress of the community. They could do so only after becoming educated. The Brahmans had been privileged in the generation, accumulation, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge, especially in term of religious education and it provided them a 'moral' ground to assert their hegemony over other sections of the society and prepared a ground for degraded lives to untouchables and low castes.[85]

In this gloomy and stagnant situation, Swami Acchutanand had made the same kinds of attempts to impart education among untouchables in the Hindi speaking region in UP as Jotirao Phule had done in western India. He established many schools in Mainpuri and Ujjain and in other areas for untouchable children when he was a preacher in the Arya Samaj during 1905 to 1912. The discriminatory behaviour of the Arya Samaj towards untouchable students compelled him to depart from the Samaj and start a movement for imparting education among the Depressed Classes. He opened night schools for untouchable children in Agra in 1917. He went from door to door among untouchable families and collected oil and flour to meet the expenses of schools. These schools were very different from the government or private schools in terms of education and objectives. His primary aim was not to facilitate

[83] Moto of 'Acchut' magazine started by Swami Acchutanand from Delhi in April 1923 (available in the personal library of Guru Prasad Madan, Dalit writer and publisher, Allahabad, UP)
[84] Translation mine from Hindi
[85] Y. C. Rao; Dalits' Struggle for Identity: Andhra and Hyderabad 1900-1950, New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, 2003, p. 55

certificates but to make them literate and conscious about their subjugated and marginalized position in the Brahmanical social order.[86]

In 1922, the Prince of Wales visited India. The Congress organized protest demonstrations all over India, but untouchable leaders like Swami Acchutanand welcomed him by organizing a '*Virat Acchut Sammelan*' (A Grand Conference of Untouchables) in Delhi where the Prince of Wales was the chief guest. [87] It is noteworthy that this *Sammelan* was attended by 25,000 people from the Depressed Classes.[88] Swami Acchutanand put before the Prince of Wales seventeen demands for the upliftment and development of the Depressed Classes. Some of these were related to the education. These were as follow:

1) Schools should be opened for untouchables.
2) Government services should be provided to educated untouchables.
3) Scholarships should be given to untouchable students.
4) Separate schools should be opened in those villages where untouchables are in large numbers. [89]

It seems that Swami Acchutanand had given much importance to education. Out of seventeen demands enunciated by him, the four demands were related to education. It was a time when the government was trying to close down the special schools for low castes. The demands enunciated by Acchutanand acknowledged the growing need for these schools. Further, it also indicated that existing schools and special measures like scholarships were not adequate; therefore these facilities should be broadened. More importantly, he pointed out the need to include the educated untouchables in government services. This demand was important because it could potentially encourage Dalit people to send their children in schools for better life and prospects.

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[86] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[87] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, pp. 271-272

[88] V.C. Lahiri; (compiled) The Prince of Wales' Complete Tour in India and Burma, Delhi: The Ratan Press, April, 1922, p. 192

[89] Rajpal Singh; Swami Acchutanand Harihar, Delhi: Rajlakshmi Prakashan, 2002, pp. 20-21. (translation mine from Hindi)

Swami Acchutanand has given education an instrumental role for occupational mobility. It was expected to equip the Dalits to overcome their caste-defined confinement to low status occupations and improve their standards of living. Further, education, for Swami Acchutanand, was also a dynamic agent of social change. The term social change implies changes in attitude, behaviour, customs, habits, manners, relations and values of the people. It also implies a change in styles or ways of living. It may also imply changes in the structure of social institutions. The function of education in relation to social change is twofold: adjustment to a changing situation or the creation of a new order through changed mode of knowledge, new ideas, and /or education for social progress. The first kind of social change could be seen among the Jatavs of Agra and adjoining areas. They believed that the task of the removal of untouchability could be achieved only within the paradigm of Hinduism and hence they followed the path of the Arya Samaj to achieve their goal. The other kind of social mobility can be noticed in terms of the initiation of a new movement, the Adi Hindu. Education, for Swami Acchutanand, was not only the means of social and occupational mobility, but a major force for identity construction and community formation on new lines. The construction of the Adi Hindu identity was a major outcome of Swami Acchutanand's educational development programmes which gave them a new sense of pride and self-respect, the foundational necessity for any movement seeking the transformation of the whole society.

Some people who had been nominated by the Provincial government as representatives of the Depressed Classes put in their individual efforts. Bohare Khemchand, Member of Legislative Assembly, raised the demand for the education of Dalit children in the Legislative Assembly of UP.[90] In 1939, there was an institute called The Jatav Men's Educational Institute at Agra, which ran five schools for boys and one for girls in Agra district.[91] Rai Sahab Ram Charan, Council Legislator, presented resolutions about employment of the Depressed Classes in police. He pointed out that if these people were also given jobs then there would be a great demand for education. He also demanded to raise the educational investment in the budget of UP.[92]

[90] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 208

[91] Ramanarayana Yadavendu; Yaduvansh Ka Itihaas (History of Yaduvansh), Agra: Navyug Sahitya Niketan, 1942, p. 6

[92] Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, Official Report, Vol. LXII, From 15th to 20th and 27th February and 6th to 9th March 1933, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, pp. 220-22

The representatives of '*Dalit Jaties*'[93] submitted a memorandum to the Governor of UP regarding the educational developments on 29 November, 1934 in Lucknow. They argued that their educational backwardness was due to their low social position within the Hindu social order. According to the Census Report of 1931, less than six people were educated out of 1000 Dalits while 94 caste Hindus were educated out of 1000 people.[94] This memorandum conveyed thanks to the Governor for granting Rs. 75,000 for Dalit students. It is noteworthy that in 1934, the Government had provided Rs. 75,000 in the budget for further expansion of the education of the Depressed Classes.[95]

The Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association of UP raised some important issues relating to the educational development for 'low' castes in 1942. It requested the government to put more money than the present grants at the disposal of Special Department for Depressed Class Education. It further requested the government to exempt the entire Depressed Class student body from tuition fees in all the government and aided schools and colleges.[96]

III

Major Educational Centers

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, there were some major educational centers in UP where people from all sections were imparted education. According to the school management point of view in UP, there were only 14 government primary schools, while 13,759 were under district boards, 737 were under Municipal Boards, 4,201 aided and 107 unaided. In total, there were 18,818 schools.[97]

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[93] It has mentioned as Dalit castes for '*Dalit Jatiyan*' in United Provinces Review, a fortnightly newspaper from Lucknow, published by Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces,1934

[94] United Provinces Review, a fortnightly newspaper from Lucknow, published by Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, Allahabad, 1934, pp. 5-6

[95] Debate on the Budget for the year of 1934-35 in Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, Official Report, Vol. LXII, From 8th to 23rd March 1934, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1934, p. 420

[96] Proceeding of the conference of the Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association of UP was held on 14-15 February, 1942 at Lukerganj, Allahabad under the Presidentship of B. Laxman Prasad Jishwar of Cawnpore. pp. 2-3

[97] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, pp. 35-35

The census of 1891 of UP gives some details of education imparted in different districts. It threw light on the literacy and the proportion of illiterate males and females in 10,000 in each district. Literacy rate of some major districts was as follow:-

Table No. 3

Districts	Number of illiterate males in 10,000	Districts	Number of illiterate females in 10,000
Benares	8,787	Dehra Dun	9,803
Dehra Dun	8,809	Benares	9,910
Garhwal	8,944	Lucknow	9,924
Lucknow	9,007	Agra	9,942
Agra	9,168	Cawnpore	9,973
Cawnpore	9,185	Hamirpur	9,993
Allahabad	9,276	Kheri	9,993
Rampur	9,711	Tehri Garhwal	9,996

Source: D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 260

In table no. 3, as regards to male education the first three districts in descending order were Benares, Dehra Dun, and Garhwal. Two of these districts were important centers of Hindu religion and owed their literacy to this fact. Dehra Dun also owed its position to the large number of European population. The position taken by Garhwal by virtue of the education of a purely agricultural population was noteworthy. Rampur was considered more illiterate than any British UP's districts. In term of female education, the first three districts were Dehra Dun, Benares and Lucknow. At the same time, Tehri Garhwal was considered most illiterate district.[98] It is noteworthy that in the Census Report of 1891 there was no specific classification of caste based education. The Census Report of 1901 does not mention city wise literacy. However, there were little details available on caste wise education.

[98] Ibid, p. 260 (from the educational point of view, the Census report of 1891 has also included the Native States with the British districts in UP.)

Central UP:

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, Allahabad had become a major educational center in UP. In the beginning, only *pathshalas* and *maktabs* dominated as the centers of education, which maintained a precarious existence without any official support. A government Anglo-vernacular school was started in 1836 in Allahabad. In 1848, the American Mission started a day-school for girls and seven bazaar schools in the city.[99] In 1891, only 724 males out of 10,000 persons were literate and the female literacy was at the bottom, only 44 female were literate in Allahabad.[100] The literacy rate increased in 1921, when 287 males and 93 females out of 1,000 persons from all religions.[101]

In Allahabad, Chamars formed a large percentage of the Hindu population. They numbered 154,803 persons or 12.08 per cent of the Hindu population.[102] But in terms of education, barely 2 males and 0.2 females out of 1,000 persons could read and write. There was only one Chamar male out of per 10,000 Chamar males was educated in English while no Chamar female had access to English education.[103] In 1931, among caste Hindus,[104] 101 males and 14 females, aged five years and beyond, were literate in the per mile area. In English education, 290 males and 59 females were literate, in all religions, out of per 10,000 persons from each sex. While looking at individual Depressed Classes, then 22 males and 0.3 females out of per 1,000 persons from the Mallah caste were literate in vernacular and 5 males and no female out of per 10,000 persons from the same caste were educated in English. The position of the Chamar caste was lower than the Mallah. Among them 6 males and 0.4 females out of per 1,000 persons were educated in vernacular and in English only 2 males were educated while the female had no access to English education among the Chamars.[105]

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[99] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Allahabad: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1911, pp. 145-146

[100] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 260

[101] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p.127

[102] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Allahabad: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1911, p. 89 & 148

[103] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p.126

[104] According to the Census of 1931, among the Brahmanic Hindus, the Depressed Classes were included while the Aryas were excluded. (Turner; 1931, p. 478)

[105] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, pp. 478-480

On the other hand, till 1845, in Cawnpore, there were merely three schools, one free school, and the remaining two were mission schools regulated by Christian missionaries. The free school at Cawnpore was established primarily for the education of poor Christian children. Yet a significant number of students in the free school came from the native population. This school was supported partly by the Government and partly by local subscriptions. The remaining two schools were both regulated by the missionaries. One was the female orphan asylum, established in 1837, and the other, a boys' school was established in the early 1840s. The total number of students in these three schools was 345. In 1891, 9185 males and 9973 females out of 10,000 persons were illiterate.[106] However, the literacy rate increased in 1921 when 201 males and 32 females, from all religions, were literate out of per 1,000 persons from each sex.[107] The untouchables had a very low literacy. In Cawnpore, the literacy rate among the Chamars was only 0.14 per cent.[108]

In 1931, the literacy rate of Cawnpore was lower than that of Allahabad. In Cawnpore, among caste Hindus, 128 males and 16 females, aged five years and beyond, were literate per mile area. On the other hand, 212 males and 41 females out of per 10,000 persons were literate in English, from all the religions. In spite of the apparent increase in the literacy rate, the literacy rate among the Depressed Classes was not improving.[109] Their backwardness in literacy played a crucial role for their deplorable condition.

Lucknow had an unusual number of educational institutions of every class and denomination. In spite of their numbers, education was practically confined to a few classes who formed but a small proportion of the population. The mass of the lower castes was left in ignorance.[110] In 1881, as regards to the literacy, 993 male and 76 female out of per 10,000 were educated in Lucknow.[111] According to the Census Report of 1921, out of every 1,000 persons from their population 786 Chamars were engaged in agriculture, 84 in labour

[106] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 260
[107] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p.127
[108] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Cawnpore: A Gazetteer, Vol. XIX of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, p.184
[109] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, pp. 478-480
[110] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Lucknow: A Gazetteer, Vol. XXXVII of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1904, pp. 128-129
[111] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, pp. 259- 260

(unspecified), 51 in leather works. But still their literacy level was very low. Only 2 males and 0.2 females were literate in every 1,000 persons of their caste.[112] In 1931, 702 males and 191 females (aged 7 years or above) from Kayastha community were educated and 293 male and 25 female Brahmans were educated in per 1,000 person. At the same time, only 5 males and 0.3 females from Chamar castes and 17 males and 0.2 females (in all ages) were educated in UP.[113] Chamars had a nominal improvement in literacy rate between the years of 1921 to 1931.

Western UP:

The educational condition of Agra, in 1891, was much better than that of Allahabad and Cawnpore, in term of male and female literacy. Out of 10000 persons, 832 males and 76 females from all the religions were literate.[114] However, the literacy rate increased in 1921 when 190 males and 53 females, from all religions, were literate out of per 1000 persons from each sex.[115] But there was no substantial progress in the untouchables' education. Again, in 1931, Agra had maintained its better literacy higher than that of Cawnpore. In Agra, among caste Hindus, 128 males and 16 females, aged five years and beyond, per mile area, were literate. Out of 10,000 persons, 257 males and 59 females from all the religions were literate, in English education. On the other hand, the literacy among the Depressed Classes was not improving as compare to the literacy of 1921. There was no improvement in the female education in both Mallah and Chamar caste. At the same time, there was small improvement in male literacy which figured +7 and +3 in case of the Mallah and the Chamar castes respectively.[116]

In Mainpuri district, the proportion of the population of the Chamars was next to the Ahirs. Their total population here was 107,386 or 13.86 per cent of the total Hindu

[112] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p. 181 & 126
[113] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, p. 480
[114] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 260
[115] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, p.127
[116] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, pp. 478-480

population.[117] In Almora district, the Chamars again formed the largest group of the Hindu population. That was 14.85 per cent of the total Hindu population.[118] But their literacy rate was very low. Out of 1,000 males from Chamar caste only two were literate in vernacular and out of 10,000 males only one was literate in English in 1911. Out of 1,000 females from the same caste, only 0.2 females were literate in vernacular and none in English. In Mallah caste, their position was slightly better than the Chamar caste. Only 3 males were literate in vernacular out of 1,000 and one male was literate in English per 10,000 males from the Mallah caste. Out of 1,000 females, from the Mallah caste, only 0.4 females were literate in vernacular and none in English, in other words, they shared the similar position with the Chamars.[119]

Eastern UP:

In eastern UP, Benares was the focal educational center in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The demonstration of practical interest by Government in public instruction dates from the foundation of the Sanskrit college in 1792. Jai Narayan's college came into existence by private efforts while the Church Missionary Society and the London Mission afterwards did much to promote education. The former started the institution for orphans in 1836, a school for infants in 1843, two girls' school in the city in 1850 and 1861, male and female schools and a model school in 1861 and several '*zanana*' schools in 1867. The London Mission opened three schools for boys in 1839 and one for girls in 1840. There were 16 primary schools maintained by the Benares municipality but these schools were generally inferior to those of the district board's schools in matter of teachers. These schools originally intended to provide a free education for children of poor parents who could not afford to pay fees. In other schools, the most important educational institution in Benares was Queen's College, which included the old Sanskrit College. Another noteworthy educational institution was the central Hindu College, which was opened in a small building in July, 1898.[120]

[117] E.R. Neave; (Edited & Compiled) Mainpuri: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1910, p. 89
[118] H.G. Walton; (Edited & Compiled) Almora: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1911, p. 67
[119] The Census of India- 1911, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1913, p. 143
[120] H. R Nevill; Benares: A Gazetteer, Vol. XXVI of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1909, pp. 170-176

In Benares, Brahmans were the largest group of Hindu community. Their population was 9,79,188 or 12.41 percent in the first decade of twentieth century. Chamars were in the second position in terms of population having share of 12.28 percent or 9,68,891 persons.[121] According to the Census of 1881, 8787 males were illiterate in per 10,000 males while 9803 females were illiterate in the same numbers.[122] There was a slight development in education in the Census of 1921. Now 289 males and 78 females were literate out of per 1,000. There was no improvement in the education of Chamars between the Censuses of 1911 to 1921. Their literacy was still very low as 2 males and 0.2 females were educated per 1,000 persons of their sex.[123] In 1931, there was a slight improvement as number was increased to 5 males and 0.3 females, from Chamar caste were become literate out of 1,000 of all ages in each sex. The Mallah caste had also a little development in education in 1931. Their numbers increased 17 males and 0.2 females, in all ages per 1,000 persons.[124]

Some Dalit Individuals: Educated During Under Period of Study

This section below is an attempt to get acquainted with some of the Dalit intellectuals who were educated during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in UP. These intellectuals played an important role in the making and the development of the Dalit print culture.

Swami Acchutanand was born on 6 May, 1879 in a Chamar family of village Mauja Umari in tehsil Sirsaganj of the Mainpuri district in UP.[125] His father, Moti Ram, and uncle, Mathura Prasad were in the army. Before joining the army, his father tried for his admission into the Umari primary school. But a Brahman teacher opposed it saying to his father, "since you earn your living through your traditional occupation, therefore, it is useless to educate

[121] Ibid., pp. 95-96
[122] D.C. Baillie; Census of India, 1891, Vol. XVI, North Western Provinces and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: N.W.P. & Oudh Govt. Press, 1894, p. 260
[123] E.H.H. Edye; The Census of India- 1921, Vol. XVI, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, United Provinces, 1923, pp.115-126
[124] A.C. Turner; The Census of India- 1931, Vol. XVIII, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, United Provinces, 1933, p. 480
[125] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India') Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 270

your child. moreover, I do not want to malign the image and reputation of the school by giving admission to an untouchable child."[126] This incident played an important role in making him conscious of the discrimination and persecution that his caste was subjected to by the upper caste Hindus. This incident also shows that despite the government policy – to spread education without caste or creed based discrimination – in rural areas, the rules of the 'holy' Brahmanical scriptures were followed. In these circumstances, to become educated was not possible for 'ignorant and backward' people like untouchables.

The Indian army not only played a crucial role in the establishment and consolidation of colonial rule over India but it also played a vital role in increasing the social mobility of the untouchable community in pre-independence era. It facilitated an education for untouchables. The British government provided 'compulsory education'[127] for its Indian soldiers and their dependents. This was particularly important for untouchables who were not admitted to village schools or were allowed to attend only under restricted conditions.[128] This is evident in the case of Swami Acchutanand. As Swami Acchutanand's father and uncle were in the British army, therefore, he got educated at a military school.[129] Therefore, education for Swami Acchutanand opened up possibilities of a better occupation other than his traditional one.

In military school, he learned Hindi, Urdu and English. There was an environment in his uncle's house where religious and social issues were discussed in detail. *Kabirpanthi sants* - who believed in *Nirguna* or formless God - were regularly visited his uncle's house and held religious discussions. Swami Acchutanand was benefited from this. Therefore, he had undergone with the informal education with *Kabirpanthi sants'* discussion. Here informal education meant, as Swami Acchutanand opined, to know the real condition of his caste and socio-religious set up which gave them a subordinate place in Brahmanical society. At the age of fourteen, he left home, travelled throughout India in the company of the *Kabirpanthi sants* to understand and experience the actual conditions of the Depressed Classes. This

[126] Sheelpriya Buddha; Swami Acchutanand: Sachitra Jeevani, (Swami Acchutanand: Pictorial Biography) New Delhi: Samyak Prakashan, 2003, p. 10 (translation mine from Hindi)
[127] Dhananjay Keer; Dr. Ambedkar: Life & Mission, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1954, p. 11
[128] Ardythe Basham; Untouchable Soldiers: the Mahar and the Mazhabis, Bangalore: Ambedkar Sahitya Prakashan, 1980, p. 30
[129] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 270

understanding made him to encourage Dalits for attainment of education. Meanwhile, he acquired a good knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Marathi, Bangla and Gurmukhi between 1893 and 1903.[130]

Babu Ram Charan (1889-1937) was born at Cawnpore. He belonged to the Mallah, a sub-division of the Nishad caste. His parents were casual labourers in Lucknow. His mother earned a livelihood for the family while his father was incapable of assisting his family in any way. Due to acute poverty, his mother went to Kanpur for her delivery at the home of her sister because she had no resources to pay for the expenses of her delivery.[131] She took him back to Lucknow at the age of seven and got him admitted to the Mission school at Hasanganj at Lucknow in 1895. After some time this school was closed down. Then later on, he was admitted into the Kurmi Pathshala and passed the examination of the lower middle class in 1899 and for the middle class in 1900.[132]

He got a job in the Railway Department in 1900; and in the Audit office in 1902. He had to seek employment at an early age due to poverty. However, he had an indomitable urge for education. In 1908, he resigned from the government job and started giving tuition to students in order to continue his education and livelihood. He got admission in the Reed Christian College at Lucknow and passed his B.A. in 1912. He passed the LL.B. examination in 1914 at Allahabad and started his legal practice at Lucknow from this year.[133]

Choudhary Nand Lal (1862-1941) was born in Allahabad. He belonged to the Jaiswar caste. Jaiswar was a sub-division of the Chamar caste group. The occupation of Jaiswers was leatherwork.[134] His father thought that his son should read and work for the upliftment of his caste brethren. Nand Lal passed his matriculation from the Government High School, Allahabad. He was employed in the meteorological observatory.[135] He used to

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[130] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, p.10

[131] Personal interview with Nand Lal Verma, Grandson of Babu Ramcharan, (age 78), Lucknow on 25 February, 2008 at 5.00 pm

[132] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 26

[133] Ibid., pp. 26-28

[134] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 169-191

[135] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 293

advise his caste brethren to maintain high cultural standards and send their children to schools. He had a notion that the untouchables should leave unclean occupations like leather-work, eating dead animals etc. and maintain their Adi Hindu culture.

Mahashya Bhikhu Lal (1904- 2004) had no formal education. The untimely death of his father forced him to engage in his traditional occupation of leather work and vegetable trade from his childhood as he had no brother. Therefore, he could not get formal school training. His mother Rukmani Devi supported him in the business of leather. She was the person who started the leather business. She produced leather for an open market and her son Bhikhu Lal sold there. Very soon, their business became very successful. Then, he had enough time and therefore, he trained himself to read and write. He educated his son, Guru Prasad Madan, who became the first Dalit from his village to attain the graduate and post-graduate degrees.[136] Besides, he also raised awareness about education among the Gihar caste.[137] He successfully started a movement for the emancipation of the Pasi caste from the *Begar* system. They were forced to provide labour without payment by the *zamindars* of Allahabad, Fatehpur and surrounding regions. During this movement, he encouraged Pasis to demand money in return of their services to caste Hindus. Bhikhu Lal also encouraged them for education. Along with this, he aroused the consciousness among the Dhobi caste (washer-man). They were told not to take *utran* (used clothes) from caste Hindus. Unless and until they demanded the money for their services, how would they be able to send their children to school?[138]

Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant' (1921-1998) born in a Chamar family in village Vidhishyama in Lucknow. During his childhood, it was forbidden for an untouchable child to get educated. Therefore, he disguised himself as a Sikh and as a Christian to complete his education in Lucknow because if he told about his untouchable background, he would be thrown out of the school. When he was in class six, his Brahman teacher failed him after he

[136] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan, Son of Mahashya Bhikhu Lal, (age 65) Allahabad on 21 February, 2007, 5 pm.
[137] Vijay Singh Chourasia interviewed Ram Singh, a Gihar caste person (age 70) who was child then Mahashya Bhikhulal started movement for their caste. (interview was taken on 22 February, 2008 at Allahabad)
[138] Telephonic interview with Guru Prasad Madan, Son of Mahashya Bhikhu Lal (age 67) Allahabad on 5 April, 2008, 9 pm. & see also Kosambi: Buddha - Ambedkar Dalit Andolan Kendrit Sankhepika (Kosambi: A Brief Booklet on Buddha-Ambedkar Dalit Movement) edited by Guru Prasad Madan, published by Ambedkar Buddha Shoudh Sansthan, Koshambi, 2008

disclosed his untouchable identity. Later on, this incident played a significant role in his emergence as a Dalit writer.[139]

Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar' (1928-2010) was born in a Chamar family at Ganeshganj in Lucknow. In his family, there were some learned persons. His father, Mangal Prasad, was an acknowledged scholar in his community. His father passed the Junior Cambridge examination in Lucknow and got a job in the British cantonment. Mata Prasad completed his primary and middle level education from Ganeshganj Basic School. Being a Dalit, he encountered many humiliating circumstances in the course of his education. The caste Hindu students always maintained a distance from them due to fear of pollution.

After completing his middle level education, he took admission to the D.A.V. College, owned and administered by the Arya Samaj. He participated, with his friend, in welcoming Mohammad Ali Jinnah on his arrival at Lucknow and read-out a memorandum of the Muslim League, which was reported in various newspapers. It is worthy to note that, though he did not join Muslim League, still he was expelled from the college by the manager of college. Thereafter, again he took admission to a D.A.V. College, but this time in Lahore, and completed his secondary (intermediate) level education. He obtained his Bachelor's degree after a long gap. Later on, he completed this course from Jhansi. In 1960, he submitted his thesis on Medieval Ayurveda. He practiced as a *Vaidya* (an Aurvedic doctor) for his livelihood.[140]

Brijnath Kureel came from a Chamar family which was totally illiterate. He was the first generation learner of his family. In 1920s, it was the time when village's *zamindar* harassed and forced for *Begar* to the villagers and his father also. Then his father thought "if my son was educated, it would never happen to him. So he decided to send me [Kureel] to school."[141] Later on, Brijnath Kureel won the Lok Sabha election in 1962 as Congress candidate from Raebareli constituency in independent India.

Sundarlal Sagar (1886-1952) was born in Agra in a Jatav family. His father, Nathu Singh Sagar, was a small contractor. His father had insufficient income to educate his son.

[139] Personal interview with Dharamvijay, son of Dr. G.P. Prashant, (age 40), Unnao on 26 February, 2007 at 5.00 pm
[140] Personal interview with Rajvidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar' (age 79), Lucknow on 24 February, 2008 at 2.00 pm
[141] R. H. Issacs; India's Ex-untouchables, New York: The John Day Company, 1965, p. 70

But there were some Christian missionary schools that imparting education among the low castes. Therefore, Sundarlal completed his primary education from a mission school in Rajamandi in Agra. Due to economic hardship, he could not attain higher education. Later on, Sundarlal joined the Arya Samaj in 1910 in Agra and started a movement for Jatavs to construct a new identity within Hinduism.[142]

Jatav Vir Manikchand (1897-1956) was born in a Jatav family at Rajamandi, Agra in UP. His father, Bholanath, was a small contractor. This was a time when the social and economic conditions of the Jatav community were miserable. They were engaged in leather work, stone cutting, construction works and agricultural labour. Again, mission schools played a crucial role for educational development for the low castes as Manikchand also received higher school education from the Saint John's School in Agra.

From the early decades of the twentieth century, some other schools were opened up in Agra other than of mission schools. A school run by the Fatehchand Trust was of this kind where student like **Ramnarayana Yadavendu** (1909-1951) completed his primary education was born in a Jatav family in Agra. His father, Dalchand Yadavendu was engaged in construction work. Ramanarayan passed high school examination from the D.N. High School, Delhi in 1928 and Intermediate from Saint John's College, Agra in 1930. He completed his B.A. from Meerut College in 1932. In 1935, he got the LL.B. degree from Agra College, Agra.[143] **Dharam Prakash** (1900-1972) was born at Mohalla Jatavpura in Bareilly in UP. By profession, his father Mohan Lal was a leather worker and the head of the Jatav community at his native place. He did his matriculation from the same place, studied, and practiced homeopathy at Bareilly and Meerut.

The first generation of the Dalit intelligentsia tried to fight against discriminatory circumstances to complete their education. Some of them were partially successful like Swami Acchutanand, Rai Sahab Ram Charan, Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Ramnarayan Yadavendu. But some of them could not succeed and they had to give up education for economic reasons or due to in ignorance of their parents. But they made it clear that their

[142] Sundarlal Sagar; Yadav Jivan, Bhag 1, 2 (the Life of Yadavs, Part 1 & 2), Agra: Shri Jatav Maha Sabha, 1929, p. 2

[143] Ramanarayana Yadavendu; Yaduvansh Ka Itihaas (History of Yaduvansh),Agra: Navyug Sahitya Niketan, 1942, pp. 6-7

children would not be illiterate. They had a strong urge to spread education and to remove the ignorance of Dalit parents about education. Mahashya Bhikhu Lal, remain who was illiterate due to family problems, made his son first Dalit post-graduate of his village and he also worked for educational development for Gihar and Pasi castes.

Conclusion

The government functionaries, the Christian missionaries, the Arya Samaj, the Adi Hindu movement and individual efforts paved the way of educational development of the deprived sections of the Indian society. On the one hand, the government and Christian missions' efforts remained a mixture of pragmatic, equivocal, calculated, and philanthropic motives with the proportions varying over a period of time. But their role in opening the closed door of education had an immense importance for the low castes. On the other hand, the Arya Samaj started its educational initiatives to increase its base within Hindu society especially among the low castes. Its aim was not simply imparting education without caste-based discrimination but to make them slaves of Hindu rituals.[144] That is why it faced opposition in Allahabad, Lucknow and other surrounding areas from the untouchables who acclaimed themselves as Adi Hindus.[145]

During colonial times, the Dalit intelligentsia visualized the crucial social potential of education. They believed that education would not only enhance the abjuration of traditional values but also inculcate preparation for change: they did not visualize education merely as a means of livelihood but as a powerful weapon to liberate Dalits from ignorance and to strengthen their fight against injustice and humiliation. They were fully aware that education is a pre-requisite for any kind of organization and movement of Dalits.

The emergence of writing and reading among the untouchables was the forerunner of the print culture that provided them with a strong medium to register their dissent against the existing social order and to raise consciousness among their fellow brethren. Their dissent

[144] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 12

[145] For more Detail: Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan,1968 & Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

has appeared in the form of Dalit literature. They have written small booklets, started newspapers and magazines to disseminate the legacy of protest to the coming generations and for claiming their due place in history as well as in the contemporary social and political scenario. For educated Dalits, it became essential that they must bring about a "counter-culture". Precisely, such a 'counter culture' would mean that the entire Dalit population should be made aware of the assigned inferior status imposed on Dalits by a socially-created Brahmanical system and also to help them reject the mythical Brahmanical order which perpetrated captivity.

Chapter 2

Evolution and Development of Dalit Print Culture: 1913-1933

Tum kab chetoge,

Shudro- Neech kahane walon.

Jaha tum karte boodon batein,

Hai ye desh tumhara tha.

Dekho zara khol itihaas,

Dasyu-Aryon ke yuddh nikalo.

Tum kab chetoge,

Shudro- Neech kahane walon.

Swami Acchutanand[1]

When will you awaken, oh Shudras and untouchables? There was a time when you used to speak with authority; when this country was yours./ only open the history books, particularly the chapter on the war between the Dasyus (original inhabitants) and Aryans (foreigners) and the picture will be right before your eyes/ When will you awaken oh Shudras and untouchables?[2]

The verse is part of *Bhajan*[3] no. 23 in the first booklet by Swami Acchutanand. It claims that the untouchables (*Neech*) and the Shudras were the original inhabitants of India and their history could be traced as far back as the war between the Dasyus and the Aryans. Here is, thus, an obvious example of what I have called Dalit literature setting itself, and consciously performing, the task of raising the consciousness of untouchables and investing them with pride and self-belief through instilling in their minds a discourse of 'right' origin as the final arbiter of a rightful claim to territorial nationality. However, here too the interconnectedness of their discourse of origin with the colonial and upper caste discourses is visible in

[1] Swami Acchutanand: Harihar Bhajan Mala: Bhagh 1, Agra, 1913 (available in the personal library of Guru Prasad Madan, Dalit writer and publisher, Allahabad, UP)
[2] Translation mine from Hindi
[3] *Bhajan* is a literary style. According to Brahmanical tradition, *Bhajans* were written and sung to show dedication towards Hindu gods. But, in the *sant* tradition, these *Bhajans* were not associated with devotionalism, rather they represented the truth of life and because of its simple style people also easily understood its meaning whatsoever.

interesting ways. The terms Dasas and Dasyus, for instance, come straight from an Aryanized history of India—Dasas and Dasyus were those supposedly 'original' inhabitants of India who had been defeated in battle by the advancing Aryans. It is particularly important to note that Swami Acchutanand did not yet find the term Dasyu (predator/marauder/robber and such are some obvious literary associations of the word) offensive enough to coin an alternative name. He had similarly used the terms Shudra or *Neech*, but with reference to the latter he carefully appends the qualifier 'so called'. Clearly, he was conscious that certain terms and phrases invoked pejorative and inferior positions/locations. Yet he could choose to rename only some of them. This excerpt documents a very inchoate, but clearly formative, moment of Dalit consciousness, as it were; one where this intellectual leadership was seized of the need to raise the consciousness of their brethren but was still only beginning to seriously work out a vocabulary of protest.

The theory of being the original inhabitants of the land was central to the evolution and development of the Dalit literature in northern India. Henceforth, in this chapter, I deal with the various aspects of the theory of the Aryan race which the Dalits intellectuals used to inspire their people against injustice by caste Hindus. There is a discussion of different themes of Dalit literature which clarifies the picture of the Dalit print culture and the politics of the Congress during the 1920s and 1930s. This time, Swami Acchutanand launched a non-Brahman movement, the Adi Hindu movement, for the advocacy of the theory of the original inhabitants and to struggle for the rights and self-esteem for the low castes. In this chapter, there is an endeavour to look into the mechanism of Dalit print culture. The central themes of discussion have been derived from the writings of Swami Acchutanand because he was the first who laid down the foundation of the Dalit literature in modern times, in the Hindi belt. Further, I have also tried to map the process of re-construction of history through the small booklets where I have dealt with the very famous piece of writing of 1930, '*Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya*' (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya) written by Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer. In the next section, the question of Jatav/Yadav identity and its place in the Dalit print culture has been discussed.

The Theory of the Aryan Race and Dalit Response

The theory of the Aryan race has its genesis in colonial attempts to 'discover' the Indian past. Indian concerns with the definition of their identity had to do with the colonial-nationalist relationship as well as the relationships among Indians.[4] With the increasing success of imperialism and the view that Europe was the most advanced among the nations, it was inevitable that the original Aryans would be relocated in history. By the end of the nineteenth century it was widely held that the Asian Aryans had their early homeland in central Asia but the European Aryans had originated from the Nordic blondes of northern Europe.[5]

The theory of Aryan race came to be viewed as foundational to Indian history largely because of the theories of British Sanskritists and ethnographers[6], and the influential role of Max Muller. The texts which initially encouraged the idea were those constituting the Vedic as the most ancient literature and the key to Sanskrit language and Hindu civilization. Their references to the Aryas and to their hostility to the Dasas were eagerly fitted into a theory which maintained that a clan of Aryans migrated from central Asia, invaded northern India and settled here by enslaving the indigenous people, the Dasas. The reference to Varna/colour in these texts was interpreted as skin pigmentation and seen as a graphic description of the fair-skinned Aryans conquering the dark-skinned aborigines.[7] Therefore, the theory of the Aryan race and the Aryans' conquest of northern India became foundational to the beginnings of Indian history. "Aryanization as a fact of the historical past is less contested but what creates divergent views is the question of whether it was alien or indigenous."[8]

The primary concern with establishing an essential Indian identity was the need to define the rightful inheritors of the land, all within the context of a gradually growing nationalism where the question of origins and the affirmation of common descent were central to nation building. Such a concern required legitimization from

[4] Romila Thapar, The Aryan: Recasting Constructs, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2008, p. 65
[5] Ibid., p. 66
[6] Some of them included Charles Wilkins, William Jones, Colebrook, Wilfred.
[7] Thomas R. Trautmann, Aryans and British India, London: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 201-211
[8] Romila Thapar, The Aryan: Recasting Constructs, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2008, p. 68

history. Therefore, this theory was of prime importance to the beginnings of Indian history.[9]

The application of the Aryan theory to Vedic India was picked up in Christian missionary circles through the writings particularly of J. Muir and J. Wilson in the 1850s. They maintained that the lower castes were the indigenous inhabitants who had been conquered and oppressed by the Brahmans who represented Aryan conquest. This provided one source of what was eventually to be labeled a Dalit view of the theory as expounded initially by Jyotiba Phule. Writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century Phule argued that the original inhabitants of India were the *adivasis* – among them he included the *sudras*, the *ati-sudras* and the untouchables – who were the descendents of the heroic peoples under the leadership of Bali. Various such categories were included under the generic label of Kshatriya. The indigenous peoples under the leadership of Bali fought the arrival of the Brahmans who, for Phule, represented the Aryan invasion when the Shudras were cultivators, land-owners and warriors and had their own culture. According to Phule, in order to fulfill their plan that "those people should remain perpetually in slavery, and that they should be able to live comfortably on what the Shudras earned by the sweat of their brow, the Brahmans set up the fiction of caste divisions, and made up several books on it for their own selfish ends."[10]

Phule's version has become essential to the Dalit perspective on Indian history. It was also to influence a number of non-Brahman movements in the peninsula. "The dichotomy between Braham and non-Brahman slid easily into the linguistic division of Aryan and Dravidian languages where the former language belonged to the Brahmin group and the latter to the non-Brahmin groups. The language demarcation was an important component of the social divide. The rejection of Aryan dominance implied a rejection of the Indo-Aryan languages. Phule's interpretation of the theory made caste *the* differentiating feature rather than race or religion in explaining the beginning of Indian history. In this interpretation, the lower castes had a chronological priority in their identity with the land."[11]

[9] Ibid.
[10] Rosalind O'Hanlon; Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 142
[11] Romila Thapar, The Aryan: Recasting Constructs, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2008, p. 38

The upper-castes had their own use for the theory and it was again given a twist which suited their social aspirations and political needs. The views of Phule were generally ignored. The theory was used to argue for the superiority of the upper castes and promote their self-esteem by maintaining that not only were the upper-castes the lineal descendents of the Aryans but that they were also racially related to the European Aryans. Romila Thapar says that Keshab Chundra Sen follows Max Mueller and John Wilson in his statement that, "... in the advent of the English nation in India we see a reunion of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race."[12]

Such views were becoming familiar to many Indians. Among them Swami Acchutanand provided a wider constituency to this theory by tracing from it the foundations of an anti-Brahman movement in the UP. Writing in the early decades of the twentieth century in the Hindi belt of northern India, Acchutanand argued that the low castes were the original inhabitants of India. He explained the contemporary low status of Shudras and untouchables by positing that with the invasion of the Aryans, those sections of the defeated who accepted the Varna system became Shudras; and those who did not became untouchables. Those who ran away to live in the forests or mountains were in turn designated as tribals or Adivasis.[13] Interestingly, neither Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, biographer of Swami Acchutanand, nor Nandini Gooptu reflects on the relationship between him and Phule. Therefore, we need to ask how Swami Acchutanand came to know about the theory of the original inhabitants of the India. Jigyasu claimed that Acchutanand read the Bengali translation of the Rig-Veda and subsequently came to know about the alien status of the Aryans from that.

The process of community formation and re-construction of identity, influenced by the debates on the Aryan theory, was at work among the untouchables of UP from the early twentieth century onwards. By that time, Bhakti devotionalism had come into practice extensively among the urban untouchables. For the poor urban untouchables, the message of caste equality and the denial of ritual hierarchy in Bhakti equipped them with the means to interrogate the discrimination, disabilities

[12] Ibid., p. 39
[13] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar", Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968 (first edition, 1960) , p. 55

and deprivation that they continued to face.[14] The first generation of the urban untouchables, especially from Chamars, Jatavs and Mallah castes, benefited from the cantonment/Christian missions' educational initiatives. The education provided by external agencies created, and was further strengthened by, a new leadership in the interwar period. The leaders guided the untouchables of the UP into and through strong protest movements against Brahmanical Hinduism and set in motion the Adi Hindu movement. To be precise, this leadership was quite small in number, just as it was among the Namasudras of the Bengal where a tiny minority had improved its economic condition through land holding, and increasing exposure to education and the professions.[15] From the second half of the nineteenth century, the Chamar caste became major agriculturalists. However, they had no propriety rights over agricultural land. But as tenants, in 1909, the Chamars became the highest rent payer caste in UP. In Moradabad district, they paid Rs. 3, 24,571 as annual rent. They were followed by Sheik Rs 3, 13,733, Jat Rs. 2, 81,268, Thakur Rs. 1, 64,419 and Brahman Rs. 1, 42,597 as annual rent. These statistics do not represent an isolated example. The presence of Chamars as one of the largest rent paying caste was a common feature of many districts of UP.[16] This shows an obvious improvement in the economic conditions of Chamars. Therefore, some individuals there did raise their economic status through replacing their 'traditional' and agricultural occupations with professions such as law, teaching etc. Because of this, a middle class or rather a lower middle class, though admittedly small, did indeed emerge.

What was particularly striking in these newly emerging conditions in the UP of the early twentieth century was the revival of the egalitarian Bhakti tradition. The members of this inchoate untouchable leadership believed this tradition to have a spiritual genealogy stretching back to the pre-Aryan period before the advent of the Vedic Hinduism.[17] At the same time, they rediscovered their *sants* or the heroes from the narratives of Brahmanical scriptures. Some of them like Sudas, Devdas, Bal,

[14] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 150-151
[15] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay; Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal 1872-1947, Surrey: Curzen Press, 1997, p. 6
[16] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; A Social History of "Chamars" in Uttar Pradesh, 1881-1956, Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Delhi, 2004, p. 75
[17] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan,1968 (first edition, 1960), p. 106

Namuchi, Chamur, Shambar, Shushan etc. were mentioned in the Vedas. Ravan, Indrajeet, Vanasur, Shambook, Sursa, Hanuman Bali, Eklavya, Matang, Prahald, Mahishasur etc. were mentioned in the Brahmanical epics.[18] It is through this act of critically re-reading the conventional canon that they re-constructed their own history. This enormous task was accomplished through the new Dalit literature that documented their dissent to the established social conventions from the early twentieth century. These documents of dissent entered the literary public sphere and strongly affirmed their voice.

The assertion by these hitherto voiceless people was strengthened with the emergence of nationalism in the late nineteenth century in India, articulated mainly by the middle classes, drawn from the upper castes who were seeking both legitimacy and an identity from the past. Origins therefore became crucial. To legitimize the status of this middle class, its superior Aryan origins and lineal descent were emphasized. It was assumed that only the upper caste Hindu could claim Aryan ancestry. Therefore, they were the only lawful inheritors of social respect and superiority. This effectively excluded not only the low castes but also the non-Hindus from social respect and recognition. Aryanism therefore became an exclusive status. In the dialogue between the early nationalists and colonial power, a theory of common origins strengthening a possible link between the colonizers and the Indian elite became very useful against white racism. For early nationalism, the Aryan and non-Aryan differentiation was primarily of an ethnic and racial kind but it had also begun to touch implicitly on class differentiation.[19] Furthermore, during the freedom struggle the English educated upper caste intellectuals interpreted the ancient period of Indian history, especially the Gupta period when orthodox Brahmanism was revived by the rulers, as the "golden period" during which all that was glorious and noble about India was in full bloom. Concomitantly, Muslim rule was portrayed as the 'dark age' when Muslims apparently persecuted Hindus. The next point following from this interpretative logic was that the new ideas of equality, fraternity, freedom and individualism arrived in India only after and through the introduction of English

[18] Sundar Lal Sagar; Adinivasi aur Unka Sangarsh (Original Inhabitants and Their Struggle), Mainpuri: Sagar Publication, 1977, p. 58

[19] Romila Thapar, "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics" Social Scientist, Vol. 24, No. 1/3 (Jan. - Mar., 1996), pp. 3-29

education. Low caste intellectuals went through the same education as upper castes, especially in cantonment/mission schools, albeit far fewer in numbers. They too were influenced by these ideas and they used roughly the same discourses to project their "golden past" in a pre-Aryan period. The only detail that changed was that the advent of the Aryans was now considered as a 'dark age' responsible for the miserable and subjugated lives of the low castes. British rule was redefined as a benevolent rule, one that provided them with a space to think and act in order to redress their deprived and marginalized condition.[20]

Racial theories were deployed by both – the high castes and the low castes, who interpreted them differently to serve their respective ends. Caste Hindus considered themselves a part of the Aryan heritage so that they could envisage themselves as equal to the European colonizers in terms of origin. Low caste intellectuals used the same argument to claim that they were the original inhabitants of India and that the Aryans were as alien as the British, and therefore some kind of an oppressive intrusion into India, an anomaly, as it were: only to be removed once low castes acquired their own capacity to take over the reins of authority. To invent a more congenial Dalit past, these intellectuals scooped out themes and references from the Brahmanical scriptures and subverted them. Here, Swami Acchutanand derived references from the warfare between the Aryans and non-Aryans in the Rig-Veda: that there was a time when non-Aryans/Adi Hindus were the king and had a thriving civilization. Further, he explained how they were reduced to slavery and to subordination.

Purkhe tumhare the Baadshah, tumhe yaad ho ki na yaad ho;
Ab Hind main tum ho tabah, tumhe yaad ho ki na yaad ho.

Itihaas main jo naamwar the, veer prakarmi dhanurdhar;
The Sabhyata main agarsar, rahte sada Dilshad ho.
Purkhe tumhare the Baadshah. (1)

Aaye the yahan Arya aye, Tumko Das ban aabad ho;
Vo jeet 'Hari' Malik huye, tum Das ban aabad ho.
Purkhe tumhare the Baadshah. (2)

[20] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, p. 27

Yadi khoon main kuch josh ho, vo behosh Kuamon jo hosh ho;

To kyon pade khamos ho, Jaago bahut barbad ho.

Purkhe tumhare the Baadshah. (3)[21]

Your ancestors were rulers once, whether you remembered or not./ Now you have been destroyed, whether you remembered or not./ They were famous in history, [they were] brave and best archers./ They were leading in civilization, lived with happiness./ Your ancestors were rulers once/

Aryans came here from outside [the land], they made you slaves and settled here./ They won [the battles] and became your master, you became slaves [and you were] living./ Your ancestors were rulers once/

If there is a little zeal in your blood, Oh! Comatose community, if you have sense./ Then why you are silent, wake up! [You have] already been ruined so much./ Your ancestors were rulers once/[22]

Interestingly, they had accepted Brahmanical myths as authentic history. They did not belong to the community of "trained" historians who look into the authenticity of records/texts etc. But the Dalit intelligentsia knew that they were still governed by the power of these myths. However, an important shift occurred when they changed the underlying ideological message of these myths to inculcate a feeling of self-respect and dignity in order to launch a struggle against the tyrannical hegemony of Brahmanism. In that sense, both upper caste and lower caste discourses mirrored each other in important ways in that both were responding in their own distinct ways to the colonial discourse of civilizing Indians. As such they were never quite absolutely autonomous from the hegemony of the master discourse, not at least in any easily or simplistically visible way. This, however, is not to deny them their distinctive voices in any way.

[21] Swami Acchutanand; Harihar Bhajan Mala: Bhag 1, Agra, 1913
[22] Translation mine from Hindi

At this point, the process of the construction of their new identity and the formation of a community outside the Brahmanical fold was helped by modern printing. The printed word leaves an enduring impression on the mind and its velocity is far greater than oral transmission. Therefore, Dalit intellectuals equipped themselves with the modern weapon of transmission: the printing press. It was not only a movement for the construction of a new identity or the formation of a community but it also led to a series of efforts which aimed to attain the status and dignity of a human being. Their struggle was not only for removing disabilities generated by religious prejudices but also to acquire their fair share in the economic resources on the ground of their being sons of the soil. Their movement was not only for gaining a respectful social status but also for attaining their legitimate political rights as the original inhabitants of India. To attain all these aims, they had to establish their own print media as the available means monopolized by the upper castes and they were not ready to assimilate them.

Modern education armed Dalits with the resource of writing that in turn further helped these initial ideologues to disseminate their understanding among their brethren. In the early twentieth century, Swami Acchutanand and other Dalit intellectuals initiated efforts to utilize the print media to spread their ideas on a large scale. Swami Acchutanand's pioneering efforts towards making a full use of the potential of writing and print culture make him possibly the first major non-Brahman ideologue to vehemently challenge the injustice of the Brahmanical social order through a printed literary discourse in the early twentieth century in north India.

The Arya Samaj and Dalit Intelligentsia

The Arya Samaj played an important role in the spread of the Dalit consciousness. The Arya Samaj was a Hindu religious organization but it was against orthodox Hinduism. However, the Arya Samaj was confined largely to those communities where other religious bodies had already begun to work; it entered these places to a considerable extent to prevent the conversion of low castes into Christianity.[23] The Samaj, seeking to return to the social and religious life of the Vedas, used the Vedic

[23] G.W. Briggs; The Chamars, Delhi: Low Price Publication, (reprinted 1990), 1920, p. 237

corpus as the blueprint for its vision of Indian society.[24] Dayanand Sarasvati underlined the linguistic and racial purity of the Aryans and the organization which he founded, the Arya Samaj, was described by its followers as 'the society of the Aryan race'. The Aryans were the upper castes and the untouchables were excluded from the Varna system. For Dayanand, caste "is a political institution made by the rulers for the common good of society, and not natural or religious distinction. It is not a natural distinction, for the four castes were not created by God as distinct species of men; but all are of equal nature, of the same species, and brothers. It is not a religious institution, for the salvation of men and their fate in the other world does not depend on its observance."[25] By declaring only four castes, Dayanand rejected the idea of sub-castes. At the same time, he also argued that caste system is not a social arrangement. But it governs men and categorically fixes his destiny and further, limits his space in the Hindu world. In addition, the castes, for Dayanand, were merely "different professions or guilds established by the state and therefore the *dejure* status could change. A change in the *defacto* status had to be ordered by the state or by society regulating itself."[26]

The Arya Samaj promised to facilitate the social uplift of lower castes, set up schools and hostels for them, offered scholarships to untouchable students and presented the hope of surmounting caste divisions by allowing untouchables to enter the Hindu caste hierarchy through 'purification' or '*Shuddhi'*. The Arya Samaj's ceremony of *Shuddhi* was designed primarily for the reconversions of Hindu converts to Islam but also at times offered to untouchables the ritual of '*prayaschit'* or atonement for sins thus implicitly suggesting that the condition of the untouchables prior to being purified was sinful.[27]

Swami Acchutanand joined the Arya Samaj but very soon he realized that the distinction between high caste Hindus and the 'purified' low castes had remained in place in spite of the Arya Samaj's *Shuddhi* initiative. He became convinced that the

[24] Y. Mimamshak (ed.), Satyarth Prakash, Sonipat, 1972.
[25] J.T.F. Jordens; Dayananda Saraswati: His Life and Ideas, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 62
[26] Ibid., p.63
[27] Kenneth W. Jones; Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1976, pp.132-133

Samaj acted as the 'army of high caste Hindus' whose only intention was to rally the Hindu community against Muslims and that the Samaj's attempt to uplift the low castes was merely a part of this strategy.[28] In a congregation of the untouchables in Meerut in 1912, Swami Acchutanand argued that "the Arya Samaj is a deceit of the Vedic religion founded to protect the Brahmanism from Muslims and Christians. Its ideology and *Shuddhi* are misleading for the ignorant masses and its Varna order, to be said, based on merits is a mere jugglery of words. The Samaj is not only an enemy of history but also the murderer of truth. The ultimate aim of the Samaj is to create animosity among Hindus, Christianity and Muslim and ultimately to make them slaves of the Vedas and Brahmans."[29] Therefore, he left the Arya Samaj in 1912 and set out to educate his community about the limits of the so-called upliftment movement of the Arya Samaj for the untouchables through his writings. His *Bhajans* were published in the form of a booklet titled "*Harihar Bhajan Mala: Bhag 1*" in 1913 from Agra.[30] This booklet is not available in its original version but some of its pages are available in the personal library of Guru Prasad Madan, a Dalit writer and publisher in Allahabad. This booklet is possibly the earliest instance of the emergence of a Dalit print culture in UP. The themes of these *Bhajans* include the history, education and social position of the untouchables and the 'touchable' low castes in Hindu social order. More importantly, these *Bhajans* impressively articulate the ideology of the Adi Hindus, which, as has been argued before, paved the way for a new identity formation among the low castes.

The Politics of the Congress and the Adi Hindu Movement

In 1920, the Indian National Congress started the Non-Cooperation movement against British rule under the leadership of Gandhi. In this year the most significant development in the UP Congress organization was the establishment of Congress committees at various levels. In principle, every village with a minimum of five

[28] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 156-157

[29] Translation in Badri Narayan & A.R. Misra (ed.); Multiple Marginalities: An Anthology of Identified Dalit Writing, Delhi: Manohar Publications, 2004, p. 17 from Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), p.11

[30] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

Congress members was to set up a village Congress committee.[31] This time the peasant movement was also on its peak. Peasants' support remained a mixture of denial and acceptance of the Congress programmes. However, once the local peasant leaders, especially Baba Ram Chandra, were arrested, the peasant movement began to appear more and more like the Non-Cooperation movement. Twenty instances were on record for the Rae Bareli district alone in which it was difficult to differentiate between *Kisan* meetings and those of the Khilafat or the Non-Cooperation.[32] The passing of the Oudh Rent Act of 1921 adversely effected the peasant movement. And further, when "*Swaraj* refused to turn up within a year, the government decided to take action against the Congress leaders and it began to arrest them one by one. The political props of the *Kisan* movement thus slowly vanished from the scene and left without organizational support, the movement died a natural death."[33] Further, Government reports also claimed that "despite the efforts of the Congress, the movement could not crystallize itself."[34] The British government too declared that "systemic terrorism of loyal citizens in India, the formation and drilling of volunteers in opposition to the Government, and the preaching and practice of disobedience to the law, cannot be tolerated."[35]

In 1922, the Prince of Wales visited India. The Congress claimed that India bore no ill-feeling against the Prince but that the visit was political and was calculated to give strength and support to the present system of government.[36] Henceforth, the Congress decided to organize protest demonstrations against him all over India. But untouchable leaders like Swami Acchutanand welcomed him by organizing a '*Virat Acchut Sammelan*' (A Grand Untouchables' Rally) in Delhi where the Prince of Wales was the chief guest. Acchutanand said: "We were subjugated by the Aryans, foreign invaders, and were thrown on the threshold of slavery and untouchability.

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[31] Gyanendra Pandey; The Ascendency of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: Class, Community and Nation in Northern India, 1920-1940, London: Anthem Press, 2002, p. 27

[32] Majid Hayat Siddiqi; Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918-22, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1978, p. 184

[33] Ibid., p. 195

[34] Home – Political, File No. 18/1921, Report on the Political Situation in India for the Second Half of July 1921 (Including the Bombay and United Provinces), NAI

[35] House of Lords, 1st Vol. of Session, 1922, Comprising Period from Tuesday, 7th February, 1922 to Tuesday, 4th April, 1922, The Parliament Debates (Official Report), Fifth Series, Vol. XLIX, London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922

[36] Home – Political, File No. 18/1921, Report on the Political Situation in India for the Second Half of July 1921 (Including the Bombay and United Provinces), NAI

Now we have to stand against our oppressors and put forward our demand for the *'Mulki Haque'* [national rights] being the indigenous people of this land. We have to welcome the Prince and put our demands to him rather than revolt against the British government."[37] By *'Mulki Haque'* he meant those rights and privileges which untouchables supposedly enjoyed in pre-Aryan times.[38] It is significant that the untouchable leaders welcomed the British Prince and showed their loyalty towards the foreign rule. They did not trust the Indian leaders who belonged to the upper castes and the Congress who were busy organizing protest demonstrations to uphold their caste interests because till now they had not raised any demand for the removal of the caste system. Consequently, the untouchables looked up to the British government for their emancipation from the discriminatory social behaviour of Caste Hindus. It is noteworthy that this conference was attended by 25,000 people from the Depressed Classes.[39] It is significant that majority of people belonged to the Chamar caste.[40]

In 1922, the excavation of the Harappan ruins and in the subsequent year of Mohanjo-Daro changed the point of origin of Indian history. Now, it was established that before Vedic culture, there was a thriving civilization and more importantly, it was not associated with the Aryans. Instead, it was claimed that this rich Harappan civilization was destroyed by the advancing Aryans. This new beginning brought about a radical change in the ideas of the Dalit intelligentsia. Now they claimed that the Harappan civilization belonged to the original inhabitants of the land, hence, to the Dalits. Swami Acchutanand maintained that the Adi Hindus had their roots in the Indus civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. He used archeological evidence to bolster self-confidence among the Dalits. He explained the contemporary low status of Shudras and untouchables by positing that with the advent of the Aryans, those sections of the defeated who had accepted the Varna system became Shudras and those who did not became untouchables. Those who ran away to live in the forest or

[37] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, pp. 271-272 (Translation mine from Hindi)

[38] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[39] V.C. Lahiri; (compiled) The Prince of Wales' Complete Tour in India and Burma, Delhi: The Ratan Press, April, 1922, p. 192

[40] Telephonic interview of Guru Prasad Madan, (age 69), Allahabad, September 12, 2011 at 10.00 pm.

mountains were in turn designated as tribals or Adivasis.[41] The Adi Hindu philosophy was crafted particularly to forge and then promote an united front of the Shudras, the untouchables, and the tribals—vis a vis the Brahmanical caste hierarchy and the doctrine and practice of untouchability—since it endowed these three groups with a common cultural and ethnic background.[42] His position about the erasure of this common history by the Aryans led him to engage in a reconstruction of history from a non-Brahmanical perspective. He was attempting, for all practical purposes, to invent, as it were, such a history, which would motivate the Depressed Classes to come together and launch an ideological and political struggle for their emancipation from slavery and Hinduism.

Earlier in this section, we have discussed the peasant movement.[43] But the state of the tenantry remained unnoticed. A large number of untouchables were tenants and agricultural labourers. The Rent Act of 1868 provided an assured position of taluqdars with proprietary rights over agricultural land which earlier was a debatable question. The Act also debarred the courts from interfering in the matter of rents paid by tenants. Therefore, this Act became fatal blow to the peasantry in UP. "Assured of their position, the taluqdars became more free to use their power to obtain all the profit that could be extracted from land. The energies, which had been once used against the Britishers, were now divested to squeeze the tenantry."[44] Enhancement of rents and eviction became common practices. Increase in rents made the tenantry more and more dependable on village Banias or mahajans. The worst kind of serfdom existed in the form of *Sawak* system which was a concrete proof of people's indebtedness. Any person belonging to Chamar, Kori, Kurmi or Lodh castes who received an advance sum of money from a rich farmer, landlord or mahajan became a bond serf for lifetime or till he repaid the advance. It was quite common to

[41] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar", Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), p. 55

[42] Christophe Jaffrelot; India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 203 (Nandini Gooptu does not provide any reference of the this kind of alliance among Shudras, untouchables and tribals in her work)

[43] For more details see: Majid Hayat Siddiqi; Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918-22, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1978 & Kapil Kumar; Peasants in Revolt: Tenants, Landlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh, 1886-1922, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1984

[44] Kapil Kumar; Peasants in Revolt: Tenants, Landlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh, 1886-1922, New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1984, p. 18

meet men whose fathers entered into these obligations and who still labour in their discharge.[45] There were some other obligations which tenants had to fulfill: for instance as *nazarana* (an extra premium on rent taken as gift payment). The *nazarana* evil had penetrated to the extent that some tenants were painfully forced to commit the heinous sin of *Kanya Vikray* (sale of daughters) in order to raise *nazarana* money.[46] Along with the *Beshi* system (tenants were not given the receipts of their rent which they paid), *Gorawan* tax (horse tax), *Hathiana* or *Hathiavan* (elephant tax), *Nazar Daura* (tenants had to pay some money when his landlord visited the village), *Durbars* (courts were held by Taluqdars on occasion of *Dushera* and *Holi*, and again tenants had to present *nazars* to their landlords).[47] High rents and an unending list of customary cesses made the life of tenants full of sorrows. If a Brahman tenant was forced to sell his daughter then what would be the condition of untouchable tenants. Ramnarayan Rawat argued that the Chamar was highest rent payer caste in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, the inner story would be different. They had to pass painfully into the *Sawak* system, as the crops were usually not good every year. To present a true picture of the tenantry and their painful life, Swami Acchutanand wrote a play. However, the main theme of the play was unjust rule of lord Rama.

Gandhi believed in "*Ram Rajya*" and praised Ram's kind and generous rule. In his rule, it was claimed that, justice has been delivered to every person of the state. To present a true picture of the "*Ram Rajya*" Swami Acchutanand wrote a play titled: '*Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan.*'(Play on Rama's Kingdom of Justice: Sacrifice of Shambook Muni)[48] The play attempts a creative re-reading of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. It focuses particularly on the unjust aspects of Ram's regime otherwise so eulogized and feted for its impartial dispensation of justice. Soon after Rama returned from Lanka to Ayodhya to reclaim his throne, a severe drought struck his kingdom and an old Brahman lost his young son. The Brahman, shaken by his

[45] Ibid., p. 22
[46] Kapil Kumar mentioned the case of one tenant Gayadin Dubey, a poor dilapidated Brahman, who sold his daughter, ten years old, to a husband about forty years old to pay the *nazarana* of Rs. 400. (Kumar, 1984, pp. 31-32)
[47] Ibid., p. 32
[48] Swami Acchutanand; Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan (Play on Rama's Kingdom of Justice: Sacrifice of Shambook Muni), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1964 (2nd edition). Jigyasu claimed that this play was published during the lifetime of Swami Acchutanand but does not mention the date and place of publication.

son's death, went to Rama and questioned his integrity as a ruler. A disturbed Rama consulted the seer Vashistha about it. Vashistha advised Rama, as some kind of an expiation, to kill Shambook, a non-Aryan, who was accused of performing a *Yajna* which was prohibited to the Shudras by the *Varnashrama Dharma*.[49] Lakshmana, too, seconded the advice of Vashistha. Rama, although caught in a dilemma, finally did accomplish the task. Subsequently, he was soundly rebuked by Shambook's wife, Tungabhadra, who had until then held Rama in high esteem. Her regard for him withered away after this horrendous act. Shambook had to part with his life for no crime other than his being a Shudra. The play exposes starkly that a high caste person can kill just about anyone who appropriates for himself a Brahmanical function (i.e. interpreted as performing against the tenets of religion, *adharm*). Shambook only performed a *Yajna*, but according to the Vedic religion, this special right was the exclusive prerogative of Brahmans alone. Interestingly, performing *Yajna* still remained an important enough job, a detail that alerts us to an aspect of the moral and ritual universe of Acchutanand's ideas that still continued to remain well within the hegemonic limits of Brahmanical Hinduism.

In this play, Shambook has been shown to belong to the original inhabitants of the land and his erudition and organizing skill reveal that the spiritual wealth of India was not a gift of the Aryans alone. Aryans were exterminators of knowledge and of knowledgeable persons belonging to the non-Aryan community. Thus, Aryan supremacy was not a product of free competition in the realm of knowledge and military skills, but was a consequence of a conspiratorial and manipulative crusade against the indigenous population.[50]

Here, Shambook is not merely a mythical hero. The author portrays him very consciously as an emancipator of the Shudras, the untouchables, and the tribals in that he had dared to undertake a task, a 'performance' that was strictly considered a closed option for someone with his social background. As I have been arguing, the new means of learning certainly expanded the Dalit imagination but it, nevertheless, remained limited to interrogating and inverting Brahmanical myths. This was due in

[49] Ibid., p. 13
[50] Badri Narayan & A. R Misra; Multiple Marginalities: An Anthology of Identified Dalit Writings, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 34-35

no small measure to the pervasive cultural hegemony of Brahmanical order.[51] The story of Shambook is an attempt to create awareness about a general Dalit history which was an essential part of the movement in an intellectual and ideological sense. The author was clearly trying to forge a feeling of a common consciousness. His core postulate was that the 'Aryans' had been creating obstacles to the moral and material progress of the original inhabitants of India and that must be removed at once. The initiation of the process of integration of various sections of the society like Shudras, untouchables, and tribals as a common anti-Brahman front was a major characteristic objective as well as a product of the emerging Dalit print culture in north India in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The noteworthy point is that the Congress was trying to integrate Dalits in the 'national' movement and Gandhi was also taking the help of Brahmanical texts like the *Ramayana* to show how the generous rule of King Rama actually meant for low caste people like Nishad and Shabri etc. But Acchutanand made it clear that neither Rama and nor Gandhi was a friend of Dalits. They were the saviour of caste Hindus. This play, in a real sense, helped Dalits to mobilize on their own for their cause. After independence, too, the Congress is unable to incorporate them in its politics.

Here, one thing is very important: the author pointed out very deliberately that this struggle would open the path to attain their political rights. Shambook was killed not just because of his *Yajna* performance but also because he was, ultimately, challenging the political authority of a Hindu king who, according to the Brahmanical commandments, was duty-bound to frustrate any such transgression.

The play proved to be very influential among the Depressed Classes. Its popularity can be ascertained from the fact that it was performed on stage more than three hundred times during the lifetime of Swami Acchutanand in Kanpur, Allahabad, Lucknow and other parts of UP during the Adi Hindu meetings.[52] It is still quite popular among the people of Uttar Pradesh. Indeed the performance of '*Shambook Leela*' (the play of Shambook) instead of '*Ram Leela*' on the occasion of the

[51] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay; Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal 1872-1947, Surrey: Curzen Press, 1997, p. 3

[52] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65) Allahabad on February 20, 2007 at 9.30 am. (The absolute number may or may not be accurate but the point is clear enough.)

Dusshera festival in various areas of UP testifies to its continuing appeal and of the ideology underlying it.[53]

Further, this play also highlighted a self-image of the low castes as good, honest and truthful simple-folk who had been conquered and deprived. This self-image was, however, not simply a passive or negative one of the good and helpless or meek and servile victims. By asserting that the low castes were the true masters of the land, Swami Acchutanand cultivated a sense of entitlement to rights and power at the same time as he heightened an awareness of historical deprivation. "The stress on *atmagyan* (self-knowledge) and introspection as the source of independent knowledge without higher-caste impositions also enabled the exposition of a distinctive, autonomous, proud and even defiant self-identity of the low castes."[54]

Moreover, Swami Acchutanand echoed and reinforced the notion of a separate collective identity of the untouchables which had begun to be expressed through *Bhakti*. He portrayed *Bhakti* as the distinctive religious heritage of the untouchables and posited the egalitarian ethos of *Bhakti* against the inequalities of Vedic Hinduism. The Adi Hindu movement spread beyond the ranks of the literate leadership because it provided a political vocabulary for the untouchables to claim rights and opportunities in urban society. The leaders drew upon the familiar religious idiom of *Bhakti* and animated it with visions of a new order of equality and rights.[55]

In this initial stage of the evolution of the Dalit literature, these intellectuals were very deeply concerned about 're-writing' or 'correcting' history. They shared a firm belief that their ancestors had had a 'glorious past'; that they had once been powerful, mighty, learned, and benevolent. Only that this 'glorious'/ 'golden' legacy was systematically violated and then conveniently erased out of history by the Aryan Brahmans. Let us not forget that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century upper caste 'nationalists' too had to invent a 'glorious past' to creatively counter the sense of the inherent inferiority which the 'civilizing mission' discourse of the *Raj* had quite firmly planted in their minds. Dalit intellectuals used the same method and

[53] Badri Narayan; Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2001, p. 96
[54] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 165-166
[55] Ibid., p. 166

discovered their 'glorious past' in the pre-Aryans period. It is therefore this mirroring that must crucially informs our analysis of these—i.e. 'nationalist' and 'Dalit'—distinct yet overlapping discourses. We must also continue to remain alert to the possibilities of their individual and collective negotiations with the various 'orientalist' and 'colonial' discourses such as the ones centering on civilizing mission or martial race and so forth.

Swami Acchutanand draws upon this understanding of history even when he wrote on events relatively closer to our time, thus implying that things had not changed much during the intervening period in any fundamental way. This was visible in his '*Mayanand Balidan'* (Sacrifice of Mayanand), a play based on a historical theme from the fifteenth century. This play delivered a massage to Dalits to live with self-respect and dignity. In this play, Mayanand, the protagonist, is portrayed as an untouchable intellectual and a kind-hearted person. He is very popular among the untouchables because of his knowledge of the 'real' Brahmanical Hinduism. He was working for the community to awaken them against injustice and discrimination of caste Hindus. That was why the Brahmans were jealous of him. Once, the king of Saurashtra proposed to construct a dam in his state. A section of Brahmans warned the king that if he did not perform any sacrifice before the construction was to begin, the project might never be completed and many kinds of misfortunes would befall the state. Upon being asked by the king about a suitable person whose life could be sacrificed, they suggested the name of Mayanand. Mayanand was duly summoned, and he most generously agreed to sacrifice his life for the welfare of the state and his people. During this time, the untouchables were not allowed to wear clothes as a marker of their polluted status. However, before the sacrifice, Mayanand demanded that his community be granted the right to wear clothes from then on. After his execution his request was complied with.[56]

Though the King and some Brahmans applauded Mayanand's sacrifice for the welfare of humanity yet this was essentially a conspiracy of Brahmans to maintain their domination in the domain of knowledge production and circulation. At the same time, the play does not present his sacrifice as an act of rebellion or defiance. The important point in this narrative is that Mayanand's caste specificity was not

[56] Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar'; Mayanand Balidan (Sacrifice of Mayanand), July 19, 1926, pp. 1-16

highlighted. He was just called an untouchable. This was thus clearly an attempt to eradicate or even collapse the existing internal differences among various untouchable castes in the twentieth century. These differences were rationalized by the hierarchized grades of pollution among low castes. For instance, the Chamar considered himself superior to the Bhangi who was engaged in the scavenging. Therefore, to remove the internal differences and to unify them as part of a common anti-Brahman front, Mayanand was represented as a generic untouchable, who could, in effect, be projected as a leader of all the untouchables. Moreover, it is also noteworthy that the untouchables did not hesitate to sacrifice even their life for the welfare of the state and people. Thus, the voluntary act of sacrifice was here reinterpreted not as an act of unconscious submission, but as a conscious choice, made to ensure the greater good of humanity as such. We can note that here the Dalit consciousness had perhaps progressed by a degree or two from the hapless murder of Shambook who had no choice whatsoever. Now we have Mayanand who could possibly exercise some agency although this agency still largely furthered the hegemonic spell of the Brahmanical caste ideology. It can be pointed out that by now there had emerged a strong urge for the recognition of the human rights among the untouchables.

Neither Shambook nor Mayanand revolted against the Brahmanical system. They laid down their lives without any resistance. Can it be consider that they had chosen the easier way, submission to Brahmanical Hinduism rather than to struggle against it? But the author highlighted a striking point here. He did not simply try to spread the message of unity among various groups of the untouchable community but also inscribed their sacrifice as ‘historical’ as the one by the king Bali. Interestingly, for him, the end is not same. For Dalits, their task, to achieve their desired status of equal and respectful human beings, was not easy. The sacrifices of Shambook and Mayanand were not an end, but just a beginning. In addition to this, Acchutanand was also trying to make them aware that they should learn a lesson from their heroes and not stop their struggle for political rights.

The year 1930 was another turning point in the history of the Congress. This time, the Congress and Gandhi started the Civil-Disobedience movement against British imperialism. The Congress tried to assimilate the untouchables and other low

castes to provide teeth to their movement. But at this time, Swami Acchutanand declared that untouchables and low castes should not be part of the Congress movement because they did not believe in equality of human beings; and that they were the supporters of Hinduism and of the Varna system.[57]

During the Second Round Table conference, although, Gandhi knew that Ambedkar was an untouchable, he continued to question his status as spokesman for the untouchable community. When Ambedkar demanded separate electorate for untouchables in the proposed constitutional reforms, Gandhi asserted, "I say that it is not a proper claim which is registered by Ambedkar when he seeks to speak for the whole of the untouchables of India… I myself in my own person claim to represent the vast mass of the untouchables."[58] In response to the development, Swami Acchutanand appealed to the untouchables especially in north India asking them to send letters in favour of Ambedkar. He told them that Ambedkar was their leader and not Gandhi. In response to this appeal the untouchables sent letters to the British Government in London claiming Ambedkar as their leader.[59] Jatavs were not influenced by the Swami Acchutanand and his movement. Despite that, they also sent letters in favour of Ambedkar.[60] Out of a total of fifty four letters, Gandhi got only three letters while Ambedkar received fifty one letters in favour of his representative status.[61] One of these letters was sent by the Adi Hindu Sabha, Almora, which categorically pointed out that "they have no faith in Gandhi and his Congress because they represent interests of caste Hindus only. Our leader is Ambedkar and he is a true representative of untouchables."[62]

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[57] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), p.42 & A Pamphlet (Dr. Ambedkar's speech which was given for publication in newspapers) printed by the Assistant Superintendent- in-charge, Government Branch Press, Lucknow, p. 4

[58] David Hardiman; Gandhi in His Time and Ours, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, pp. 130-31

[59] Personal interview with R.C. Kureel, (age 52), General Secretary of Shri 108 Swami Acchutanand Smarak Smiti, Kanpur, UP, February 12, 2008 at 10.00 am.

[60] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 83

[61] Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi'; Ambedkar ke Jivan ki Ek Jhanki (A Glimpse into Ambedkar's Life), Allahabad, 1947, p. 7

[62] Telephonic interview of Guru Prasad Madan, (age 69), Allahabad, September 12, 2011 at 10.00 pm.

The British government announced the Communal Award for the Depressed Classes in 1932. The government explained that "India was a country of vast area and her population (over 3,50,000,000) was larger than that of any other country in the world, not excluding China… her inhabitants differed greatly from one another in race, caste, creed and culture, and in the degree in which they are able to understand and to work modern democratic institutions. It was therefore absolutely essential that under a system of democratic and responsible government, such will be conferred on India by the new constitution, the aspirations, political and otherwise, of those classes who were in a minority, should be adequately protected and represented. By this means alone the minority communities could be safeguarded from the exercise of unrestricted power of a majority."[63] According to it, the right of separate electorates was to be given to the Depressed Classes. A separate electorate meant "an electorate composed exclusively of the Depressed Classes' voters who were to elect a person from their own community as their representative to the Legislature."[64] There was another provision that the Depressed Classes' people were also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It was intended that these constituencies would be formed in selected areas where the Depressed Classes were most numerous.[65] Caste Hindus agreed that a certain number of seats were to be reserved for untouchables to be filled only by untouchables. But they insisted that the candidate who was to be the representative of the untouchables in the legislature should be elected by a mixed electorate consisting both of caste Hindus as well as of the untouchables.[66] It is important to note that the Communal Award was not acceptable to the Depressed Classes in its totality because M.C. Rajah, Ambedkar and other representatives of the Depressed Classes were dissatisfied owing to inadequate number of seats allotted to them.[67] The '*Dalit Bandhu*', a newspaper belonging to the Depressed Classes, also registered their disappointment regarding the few seats reserved for separate electorates.[68] Nevertheless, later on, the Depressed Classes accepted the Award. But it created a dangerous situation for caste Hindus because now they were surely losing a

[63] Home – Political, File No. 41/1/32 Note on the Communal Award, , NAI
[64] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables, Jullundur: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1943, p. 25
[65] Home – Political, File No. 41/1/32, Note on the Communal Award, NAI
[66] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables, Jullundur: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1943, p. 25
[67] Home Department – Political, File No. 41/4/32, General Appreciation of the Communal Award, NAI
[68] Ibid.

huge majority of people who were never considered as human beings in the history of the Brahmanical Hinduism.

Gandhi objected to the Communal Award. According to him it would create divisions within Hindu society. He further threatened the government by saying that "he would oppose this move if necessary at the expense of his life."[69] He argued that it would ensure their bondage in perpetuity. After getting the right to separate electorates Muslims still remained Muslim. Therefore, if untouchables also attained this right then they will remain untouchables forever.[70] The objection to separate electorates raised by caste Hindus was that it would mean the fragmentation of the Hindu nation. Ambedkar replied saying that "there is no nation of Indians in the real sense of the word. The nation does not exist, it is to be created. The suppression of a distinct and a separate community was not a method of creating a nation. Secondly, if it is conceded that untouchable should be represented in that Legislature by untouchables then it cannot be denied that the untouchable must be a true representative of the untouchable voters. If this is a correct position then separate electorate is the only mechanism by which real representation can be guaranteed to the untouchables."[71]

On May 18, 1932, a meeting of the 'All India Depressed Classes Conference' was held in Kamthi in the Central Provinces. More than a hundred delegates from all over India participated in the conference and on the proposal of Swami Acchutanand Rai Sahab Muniswami Pillay, an M.L.C. from Madras, was elected its president. The conference unanimously passed a resolution that "with separate electorate we [will] swim and with joint electorate we [will] sink."[72] Gandhi commenced his world famous fast unto death on September 20, 1932 in protest against the Communal Award. Later on, the Award was converted to the Poona Pact on September 24,

[69] Christophe Jaffrelot; India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 23
[70] M.K. Gandhi; (Compiled & edited by B. Kumarappa) The Removal of Untouchability, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1954, p.178
[71] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables, Jullundur: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1943, p. 26
[72] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), p.47 (translation mine from Hindi)

1932.[73] But the circumstances and the time were important to choose the fast unto death 'programme'. It was the time when the Civil Disobedience movement was slowly dying. The Congress leaders were becoming more and more despondent. This timely fast at one stroke restored Gandhi to a pre-eminent position in the estimation of Hindu India and diverted the energies of many congressmen to the removal of untouchability campaign.[74]

Swami Acchutanand opposed the Poona Pact and declared it a conspiracy of caste Hindus against the untouchables. He convened a conference to organize demonstrations against the Poona Pact in September, 1932. He moved from place to place and tried to mobilize people against the Pact.[75] He also criticized Ambedkar. He said that Ambedkar had no right to take such an extreme decision that would hamper the overall development of their struggle. He had the notion that only separate electorates can solve their problems and further, it can give them the key to capture the political power.[76]

One noteworthy point is that this time, in the 1920s and the 1930s, Dalit politics became a matter of urgent national attention. It was the first time when they were regarded as a real part of Hindu society. Without them, castes Hindus were dying. They were looking towards Dalits as their savior. We may ask a question: Why they were suddenly became so important and essential? Why Dalits became the central point of discussion in Indian politics? The answer lies in the politics of number/population and to need to keep Hindu majority intact in India. This time Dalits were becoming united and more importantly, they established their organizations. In western India, Ambedkar launched the Mahad Satyagraha and temple entry movements. Although, caste Hindus erupted the violence against Dalits. Nevertheless, Dalits remained non-violent which provided a core of attraction to these movements. In northern India, the Adi Hindu movement played a crucial role to

[73] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 37

[74] Home – Political, File No. 19/2/42, Propaganda in the Event of Mahatma Gandhi's Resorting to Fast, NAI

[75] R.K. Kshirsagar; Dalit Movement in India and Its Leaders 1857-1956, New Delhi: M.D. Publishers, 1994, p. 346

[76] Telephonic interview of Guru Prasad Madan, (age 69), Allahabad, September 12, 2011 at 10.00 pm.

spread awakening among Dalits. Consequently, the Congress did not successfully incorporate them in its movement and national politics. The Ad Dharm movement in Punjab, under the leadership of Mangoo Ram also became a central attraction where it rejected the Arya Samaj and subsequently Brahmanical Hinduism. In southern India also, the Adi- Dravida and the Adi Andhra movements were prevalent. The occurrence of these many movements was not a coincidence. Rather it was a strong demarcation of a growing self-consciousness and awakening among Dalits. The Communal Award also provided a new stature to their movement. Caste Hindus were forced to think about Dalit politics. Unexpectedly, Dalits became an essential part of their history and religion. But this was not the indication of their *Hridya Parivartan* (change of heart), rather it proved their cunning. Dalits were becoming so dear because if they got separate electorates, then caste Hindus would certainly loose a large bulk of their population. Henceforth it would provide a negative impact on their politics of numbers and then they would become a minority and a substantial part of population would be move away from their subordination.

To make untouchables as an integral part of Hindu community, Gandhi coined a new title for them: '*Harijan*' which means 'son of the God'. Swami Acchutanand, Ambedkar and other untouchable leaders vehemently opposed it. Swami Acchutanand also wrote a poem titled '*Kiyo Harijan Pad Hame Pradan*' to show his anguish. Swami Acchutanand argued that if "untouchables are the son of God than are caste Hindus the son of devil?"[77] He said that with naming the untouchables the *Harijan* Gandhi had ensured untouchability for perpetuity.

"Kiyo Harijan Pad Hame Pradan"[78]

Antyaj, Patit, Bahiskrit, Padaj, Pancham Shudra mahaan,
Sankar-varna aur Varnadharam pad Achoot upman.
The pad rache bahut rishiyan ne, humre hit dhare dhyan,
Phir "harijan" pad diyo hame kyon, hey Gandhi bhagwan.
Hum to kehat hum Adinivaasi, Adi vansh santaan,
Bharat Bhuiya mata humri, jinko lal nishan.

[77] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; (Translated & Edited by Sundarlal Sagar & C.P. Jigyasu) Gandhi Ambedkar Vivad, Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1966, p. 51
[78] Swami Acchutanand; Adi Vansh Ka Danka (Exhortation of Original Dynasty), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 5th edition in 1956 (there is no information about its first edition)

Aaye vansh vaare-saare tum, liye Ved ko gyaan,

Pata nahi kit te it aaye, bandhe oonch machaan.

'Hari' ka arth Khuda 'jan' bandaa janat sakal janhaan.

'Bande Khuda' na baap-maaye ka jinke pata thikaan,

Harijan,Haridasi,Devdasi,Ramjani samaan,

Veshya-sutt janat sab jan,besoi hai sanmaan.

Hum Harijan to tum hoon Harijan kas na, kaho shrimaan,

Ki tum ho unke jan, jinko jagat kehat shaitaan.

Hum nisang se maarat-swami, bahu humro udhyaan,

'Harijan' kahi harijan humro tum, kahe karat apman."

'*Antyaj*' (discarded), '*Patit*' (degraded), '*Bahishkrit*' (outcaste), '*Padaj*' (produced from feet), '*Pancham*' (fifth Varna), great '*Shudra*', '*Sankar- Varan*' (mix Varna) and '*Acchut*' (untouchable) etc: we have many titles / The great [Brahmin] seers provided us with these names to pay attention to us/ Now, why has 'Gandhi *Bhagwan*' (God Gandhi) given us another name '*Harijan*'?/ We are claiming that we are the original inhabitants, sons of the '*Adi Vanshis*'/ '*Bharat Bhuiya*' is our goddess; it has a red colour. You came here from outside with the knowledge of the Vedas and crushed our lineage/ *'Hari*' means God, who knows whole world. *'Bande-Khuda'* means the son who has no knowledge of his parents./ '*Harijan*', '*Haridasi*', '*Devdasi*', '*Ramjani*' are all equal and all know that these are sons of prostitutes and they are being treated as such./ If we are '*Harijan*', then tell us sir; are you not '*Harijan*'? or you are the son of devil?/ We were the owners of India from the beginning of the 'Universe' and we had a prosperous rule earlier/ Why are you insulting us by calling us '*Harijan*'?[79]

The Muslim community got the right of separate electorate in 1909. Initially, the Congress showed its resentment towards the government decision. Importantly, there was no such leader like Gandhi who could undertake fast unto death to stop the implementation of the government decision then. After all the Indian nation was

[79] Translation mine from Hindi

going to break up. But the Congress replied to the 'situation' after some time, in 1916, and surprisingly accepted separate electorates for Muslims. But in case of the Depressed Classes, they found their communal interests supreme over the nation. Dalits remained in their subordination from the centuries while the Muslims had no such kind of subordination. Caste Hindus considered Dalits as their property only. That is why they were denied even from the basic human rights. The deprivation and backwardness of a community remained a core requisite for separate electorate. Muslims got that right on the basis of their political deprivation. Therefore, Ambedkar's own position also had a strong justification: "the interests of Dalit, who were in a minority everywhere, would not be submerged in the politics of the majority."[80] The Communal Award was giving them political rights and consequently it would strengthen their struggle against Brahmanical Hinduism. Therefore, to maintain the 'previous' situation of Dalits the Congress vehemently opposed the Award. The intensity of their opposition can be inferred from the fact that their highest ranked leader, Gandhi, took the risk of his life to save the interests of Hindu community.

However, Nandini Gooptu has argued that the Adi Hindu leaders did not produce a solid criticism of the caste system. They aimed mainly at "challenging their social and political exclusion. Even while they denied the validity of caste distinctions and exclusions, they concentrated primarily on bypassing the caste system, and did not launch a direct onslaught on some of the basic premises of the caste system such as purity and pollution. The leaders did not jettison the notions of 'low' or 'impure', on which caste distinctions were based, but focused their attention on proving that such stigma and disabilities should not be attached to the untouchables."[81] Nandini Gooptu is right when she finds a massive presentation of socio-political exclusion in Dalit literature. At the same time, we have discerned in the literature that they were very conscious about the caste system and declared that because of the caste system they were reduced to slavery and subordination. For example, we can look at one of the poems of Swami Acchutanand where he beautifully articulated views regarding the caste system and the hierarchical model of the Brahmanical social set-up and this

[80] David Hardiman; Gandhi in His Time and Ours, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 131
[81] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 163

poem, ultimately, instills a feeling of discontent and says that the caste system and the *Manusmriti* should be burnt. His famous poem, '*Manusmriti Hamko Zala Rahi Hai'*, can refute Nandini Gooptu's question. This poem shows that the Brahmanical scriptures presented everything in such a way that untouchables and Shudras considered their exploitation as their destiny without questioning and how the Brahmanical mentality was still ruling over the Depressed Classes.

"Manusmriti Hamko Zala Rahi Hai"[82]

"Nishdin Manusmriti ye, humko zala rahi hai,
Upar na uthne deti, niche gira rahi hai.
Brahman aur Kshtriyon ko sabko banave afsar,
Humko purane utran pehno bata rahi hai.
Daulat kabhi na jode, agar ho to cheen le veh,
Phir neech keh humara dil bhi dukha rahi hai.
Kutte aur billi makkhi, se bhi banake nichha,
Haan shok! Gram bahar, humko basa rahi hai.
Humko bina majdoori bailon ke sang jote,
Gaali aur maar us par humko dila rahi hai.
Lete begar, khana tak pet bhar na dete,
Bachche tadapte bhookho, kya zulm dha rahi hai.
Kah doonga Ram se main! Isse bhala na hoga,
Hum bekason ko "harihar" gar vah rulaa rahi hai."

The *Manusmriti* is burning us every single day/ It is not only not allowing our upliftment, it is pushing us further down. /It made officers among Brahmans and Kshatriyas while telling us to wear '*Purane Utran*' (old used clothes)/ It is not allowing us to accumulate money; if we accumulate then it will be snatched away by the Brahmans/ It calls us '*Neech*' (low or mean) and makes us lower than their dogs and cats/ Alas! It is ordering us to live outside the village/ Without giving us wages, it makes us plough [the field] in place of an ox; It sanctions abuses and beating/ They [caste

[82] Swami Acchutanand; Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan (Play on Rama's Kingdom of Justice: Sacrifice of Shambook Muni), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1964 (2nd edition), pp. 19-20.

> Hindus] are taking '*Begar'* (labour without wage) without giving us proper food/ Its oppressive nature is the cause why our children die out of hunger…/ I will say to Ram, there will be nothing good for you… [Because] this is making us cry.[83]

The *Manusmriti* categorically laid down that untouchables "shall live on curing of leather; drum beating, killing or capturing hole-dwelling animals, etc".[84] There was no possibility to change their occupations as the text laid down imposition that "doing their proper works, these castes [untouchables] shall live in the forest, or cremation grounds, etc".[85] The text, furthermore, outlined that "Chandalas and Svapachas shall live at the out-skirts of villages, they shall use no utensils; dogs and asses being their only wealth."[86]

The *Manusmriti* symbolizes the entire philosophy of oppression within Brahmanical Hinduism. It is not only a book of law that subordinates untouchables but it is a way of life. According to Swami Acchutanand, it legitimized caste oppression and directed the lives of caste Hindus as well as low castes. Everything is shown as pre-determined and unobjectionable. Therefore, low castes have to follow it without questions. The author pointed out that the low caste people should not follow those Brahmanical scriptures which were written without their consent. The *Manusmriti* was not their text; rather it was imposed upon them forcefully.[87]

Untouchables were regarded as superstitious and backward in the traditional Indian social system. It was also noticed by some British ethnographers. For instance, W. Crooke wrote that "the ordinary Chamar believed that disease, death and all troubles were due to demonical influence. When a person fell ill a sorcerer (*ojha*) was called in, and he pointed out the particular evil spirit which was responsible for the

[83] Translation mine from Hindi
[84] Manu Samhita, (X, 49), translation in English by Manmatha Nath Dutt (Shastri), Calcutta: Elysium Press, 1909, P. 372
[85] Ibid., (X, 50).
[86] Ibid., (X, 51).
[87] Swami Acchutanand; Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan (Play on Rama's Kingdom of Justice: Sacrifice of Shambook Muni), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1964 (2nd edition), p. 19

mischief and the appropriate sacrifice by means if which he can be appeased."[88] Therefore, this was prime time for Dalit intellectuals to address this grave problem because only a society based on free debates could start its struggle against injustice and oppression. Consequently, Swami Acchutanand gave great importance to science. His '*Vigyan Bhajan Mala*' stands testimony to this aspect of his intellectual make up. In this booklet he advised the untouchables to remove superstitions from their life and live according to scientific ideas and practices. He asked them to question everything which is written in religious texts. Science, for him, was a way which would open up the path away from their mental slavery under Brahmanical Hinduism. He wrote another booklet '*Parakh Pad*'[89] which advised untouchables, for instance, that before performing any job they should think over its implications for their self-respect and dignity.

In '*Satguru Strotra*', he emphasized the role of a true Guru in one's life; and in '*Meera Va Guru Raidas Kee Vani*', he compiled the *Bhajans* of Meera which she had dedicated to her *guru* Raidas.[90] In this strand of his intellectual output he appears to emphasize the role of right preceptor in the successful pursuit of the interests of an individual or a group with particular emphasis on equality.

Swami Acchutanand believed in the *Sant* tradition. Therefore, he had no faith in polytheism. He considered *prakriti* (nature) itself as supreme power. He said: "our religion is the way of the saints. This has been our religion for centuries or even longer. This religion had produced hundreds of sants and their preaching constitutes essence of our religion. Our mothers and sisters since centuries praying to the mother earth because this land is the land of our forefathers and their forefathers."[91] He did not believe in theory of *Karma*.[92] The theory itself was an obstacle for the progress of Dalits specifically and for human beings generally. It denied people the right to question their social or religious status. In other words, it legitimized the

[88] W. Crooke; The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Province and Oudh, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1896, reprint by Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 189
[89] Some of its parts were published in the Adi Hindu newspaper of Swami Acchutanand in 1927.
[90] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969
[91] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), pp. 58-59 translation in Christophe Jaffrelot; India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 203
[92] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am

discrimination and oppression of low castes on the basis of their earlier action in past lives.

It is noteworthy that no less than twelve thousand tracts of Dalit booklets were distributed in the *'Prayag Mahakumbha Mela'* in 1929. The names of some of the tracts were *'Mahakumbha Ka Prasad Aath Hazar', 'Adi Hindu Alha', 'Acchut Swami Kee Pukar', 'Vigyan Bhajan Mala', 'Satguru Strotra', 'Meera Va Guru Raidas Kee Vani', 'Adi Hindu Bhajan Mala', 'Acchut Swami Ko Mar Dalne Kee Dhamki',* etc. All these tracts were attributed to Swami Acchutanand. He also wrote four plays, of which two, *'Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Sambhuk Muni Balidan'* and *'Mayanand Balidan'* were published in his life time, and the other two, *'Parakh Pad'* and *'Bali Chhalan'*, remained unpublished.[93]

Swami Acchutanand did not just write booklets on religion, historical themes or on social and political conditions. He also started a monthly journal '*Achhut*' in April 1923. It was published from Delhi and continued up to 1924. He started editing a newspaper '*Adi-Hindu*' from 1925 to 1933 from Kanpur. [94] This newspaper, initially a monthly, became a fortnightly after some time and finally became a weekly. Through it he started a counter-discourse against mainstream Hindi literature on various issues related to religion, history, politics, and society. Francesca Orsini has given a beautiful account of the 'Hindi' public sphere where she deals with the question of nationality in the Hindi literature. Nevertheless, it is seen that in her account, she does not provide the full details of complete Hindi literature. A comparatively small but significant component of Hindi literature, that is, Dalit literature, remained unnoticed. She picked up various themes from Hindi literature and even talked about gender in the Hindi public sphere. It was the period when the Dalit writers were also using the Hindi language for their writings. But she fails to analyze Dalit literature which was the contemporary of the 'golden age'[95] of modern Hindi literature. Dalit literature has its own importance for the development of the

[93] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (first edition, 1960), p.73

[94] The edition of Adi Hindu's October 1927 is available in the personal library of Guru Prasad Madan, Allahabad. There is mentioned on the top of the edition "year 2 and number 1", which means that this magazine was started two year before i.e. 1925

[95] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 16

Indian society. It can be argued that her account of the 'Hindi' public sphere is not a complete description of that time; in other words, she is talking about the caste Hindu public sphere of the Hindi belt.

Acchutanand's literary contribution made it clear that he tried to spread self-awareness among untouchables and Shudras against long-standing mental and intellectual slavery. He was in many ways a pioneer who realized the need of integration of thousands of low castes. He spoke not only about the welfare of the untouchables alone but also tried to visualize a mechanism by which India could be become a 'nation' of equals. Participation of all people on equal terms, he was clear, was a pre-requisite feature for the process of nation building. The Congress and caste Hindus also claimed that India was becoming a 'nation' but they did not even speak for the abolition of caste system. Without abolishing it, there was no chance for becoming a 'nation' of equals. Caste system itself legitimized the hierarchical model of Indian society, and further, it provided a base to strengthen the discrimination on the caste lines.

Many Dalit intellectuals followed the literary discourse and print media that Swami Acchutanand had initiated and they actively carried forth his literary legacy. This section of the Dalit intelligentsia attempted to re-read history and to analyze it from a subaltern perspective. The emergence of the print media strengthened the articulation of their voices of dissent along with the popularization of a different framework and a new analysis to re-interrogate the processes of history as they were dished out to them.

Re-construction of History and Dalit Literature

Francesca Orsini argues that in the 1920s and 1930s the focus on a re-construction of history was increasing in the Hindi belt. In the mainstream or Hindi public sphere, intellectuals had a notion that "the nation which does not have as authentic history of its own is not a living nation…. The history textbooks which are taught in Indian schools and colleges are extremely misleading and unreliable. Our heroes like Sivaji are called 'looters'! Our Vedas are called ballads of herdsmen and peasants! Can such books be called histories? Can any scholar and dispassionate historian say that such

historical books contain a true picture of life in ancient India?"[96] The re-construction of history was not only the major agenda of the Dalit literature but also a crucial feature and the demand of that particular time.

History is an important part of Dalit literature. Collective histories have much more significance than the freedom of an individual. Everyone should defend his or her own history at the cost of personal freedom because the struggle for freedom can only be started if we have control over history. It is a well-known fact that communities cannot survive if they have lost the history of their ancestors.[97] Bearing these ideas in mind, intellectuals from the Depressed Classes made arduous attempts for constructing a Dalit past. In the process, they derived themes from the Brahmanical scriptures like the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas, and other texts about their social, political, and religious discrimination.

In the context of north India,[98] the theory of the Adi Hindu or original inhabitants of India was propounded by Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' in a big conference of untouchables in Delhi in 1922. For the very first time, this theory was also described by another writer in the form of booklet titled '***Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya'*** (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya). It was written by Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer. This booklet was edited by the renowned writer and publisher Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu and was published with the assistance of Babu Ramcharan from the Nishad Printing Press,[99] Daliganj in Lucknow in 1930.[100] The first edition had a print run of one thousand copies.

This booklet critically examined the deplorable situation of the Depressed Classes and pointed out that the advent of the Aryans was the beginning of an unending era of miserable and subjugated life for the original inhabitants i.e. Depressed Classes. The Aryans imposed many brutal disabilities upon the Depressed

[96] Ibid., p. 182

[97] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, 'Bharat Ke Adi-Nivasiyon Ki Sabhyata'(The Civilization of India's Original Inhabitants), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1937 (9th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 1993), p. 7.

[98] In western India, Jotirao Phule propounded the theory of original inhabitants of India in the second half of nineteenth century.

[99] Personal interview with Nand Lal Verma, Grandson of Babu Ramcharan, (age 78), Lucknow on 25 February, 2008 at 5.00 pm.

[100] After a great demand from Dalit readers, this booklet is reprinted from Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh in 2005. (Personal interview with A.R. Akella, Dalit writer and publisher, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00pm.)

Classes with the help of Brahmanical literature and ultimately threw them into slavery and untouchability. Hinduism as a religion is a bundle of rules and regulations. It reflects the cunning of upper castes, which acquired financial, military and educational powers, and deprived others of their freedom and rights. It also discussed in detail the views of *sants* like Kabir, Raidas, Guru Nanak, Radhaswami, Dadu, Meerabai, Tulsi in order to demonstrate the life and knowledge of *sant* tradition which was far better and simpler than the Vedic age. Kabir and other *sants* pointed out that the Varna system, based on inequality, created impediments to the progress of society while a true knowledge of humanity is necessary for livelihood.[101]

The ideas of Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, B.G. Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, R. C. Dutt, Jawaharlal Nehru and many other non-Dalit intellectuals are evaluated regarding the place of origin of the Aryans. The author has mentioned that according to B. G. Tilak, the Aryans' homeland was situated in the North Pole and from there, they had migrated to India. Simultaneously, the author observed that Central Asia, as western scholars opined, was the native place of the Aryans.[102] The author pointed out the various prevalent theories of the Aryans' homeland in order to demonstrate that the Aryans were not the original inhabitants of India. Gandhi argued, "We have created an untouchable community in our world and it is the result of this stigma that we are facing foreign rule. The Aryan invaders treated the original inhabitants of India with cruelty as we are badly treated now by the British invaders."[103] Lala Lajpat Rai pointed out "we should accept this historical truth that the Aryans were not the original inhabitants of India. When the Aryans came to India there was a thriving civilization of Dravidians[104] who were pushed down in southern India by the Aryans."[105] R.C. Dutt said that the "the Aryans snatched the land of the seven rivers

[101] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; 'Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya'(Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, pp. 70-102
[102] Ibid., pp. 123-182
[103] Ibid., pp. 119-120 (The author quoted from 'Aj' and 'Vartman' newspapers on 27 December, 1924. Mahatma Gandhi delivered a presidential speech in 39th annual meeting of Indian National Congress.) translation mine from Hindi
[104] The author called the untouchables and the low caste people as Dravidians.
[105] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer; 'Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya'(Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), Lucknow: Nishad Printing Press, 1930, pp. 121-122 (The author quoted these ideas from the Lala Lajpat Rai's Bharatvarsh Ka Itihas (Hindi translation) on page numbers 21 to 22.) translation mine from Hindi

from the original inhabitants of India."[106] Jawaharlal Nehru opined that "the Aryans migrated to India in search for food and better land. They were powerful and belonged to a martial community. The Aryans attacked the Dravidians from the North. In the initial stages of their attacks the Dravidians tried to stop them but when the Aryans became numerically very large then they crushed the Dravidians and spread out all over north India."[107] These references proved that the Aryans were foreigners and they established their rule on the ruins of the original inhabitant's civilization.

This booklet was published in the initial stage of the evolution of the Dalit print culture. At that time, there was a need to explain their exploitation and make them to assert their lost human rights. It also became important when in 1929 the Congress demanded *Purna Swaraj* (complete Independence) from the British government. In the next year, Gandhi started the Civil Disobedience movement to intensify the freedom struggle. At this time, the publication of this booklet clearly pointed out that despite several promises of the Congress about the upliftment of the untouchables and the low castes, the differences between the Depressed Classes and the Congress were increasing because they demanded their rights from the British government instead of the Congress.

This booklet tried to create a common consensus on the issue of the original inhabitants of India. The author presented the ideas and perspectives of 'nationalist' leaders where they accepted that the people of the Depressed Classes were the original inhabitants of India. This booklet played an important role in the process of the 'identity formation' outside the Brahmanical framework among the low castes and re-construction of their history. Further, it tried to inculcate a sense of superiority among them by proving that their civilization was far better than that of the Aryans. It also helped the original inhabitants to get rid of the superstitions of Hindu rituals that were obstacles in their progress and identity formation. At the same time, the welfare nature of the Adi Hindu civilization is portrayed on the canvas of Dalit history. It was

[106] Ibid., pp. 136-138 (The author quoted from R.C. Dutt's Prachin Bharatvarsh Ki Sabhyata Ka Itihaas, (Hindi translation), on page numbers 17to 19.) translation mine from Hindi
[107] Ibid., pp. 163-167 (The author quoted from the 29 and 30 chapters of the "The Letters to Daughter" (Hindi translation) by Jawaharlal Nehru.) translation mine from Hindi

argued that the pre-Aryan civilization was based on the norms of equality, justice, fraternity, and freedom. These values were radically different from the Aryan civilization which was based on inequality, injustice, and subjugated position for the deprived sections of the society.

Francesca Orsini argues that "the political expression and impact of the Adi Hindu movement was sporadic and limited."[108] The Adi Hindu movement lasted till 1942 when it was merged within the Scheduled Castes Federation of India, founded by Ambedkar. The Chamar caste remained at the forefront of the Adi Hindu movement, although there was a huge participation from other castes also like Mallah, Khatik, Bhangi, and other low castes.[109] But the legacy of the movement does not uphold Orsini's comments. Rather it elucidates a different narrative. This movement remained a driving force to strengthen their struggle and offered them a "weapon"; through this their emancipation from the Brahmanical system could be attained. That "weapon" was the print media and Dalit intellectuals rightly utilized it. This is still a powerful source of inspiration for many modern Dalit writers and publishers in the UP.[110]

The Question of Jatav/Yadav Identity

In the evolution and the development of the Dalit print culture, we come across a different point of view which is totally opposite to the Adi Hindu identity and culture. These ideas were prevalent in the Jatav, known as Chamar, community of Agra and its surrounding regions. In the traditional Hindu social order Chamars are ranked at the bottom of society due to their "unclean" and "polluted" work. In the early twentieth century, Chamars were, however, normally employed in agricultural and general menial labour; many of them worked in the stone quarries. They also worked as tenants on the land of caste Hindus.[111]

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[108] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 205

[109] Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[110] Personal interview of Guru Prasad Madan, Allahabad, (age 69) on February 21, 2011, 5.00 p.m; A.R. Akella, (age 60) Dalit writer and publisher, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00 pm; Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Dalit writer, (age 79), Lucknow, on 24th February, 2008 at 2.00 pm.

[111] H.R. Nevill; (Edited & Compiled) Agra: A Gazetteer, Vol. X of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Govt. Press, U.P., 1905, p. 75

The Jatavs were engaged in shoe and leather industries which bloomed into a full-fledged industry in the 1920s. With leisure, independence, and security, the wealthier Jatavs had the scope to engage in intellectual activities. They aimed to live a privileged life through social mobility within the caste system. For them, a significant change came with the growth of mission schools and, more importantly, the growth of the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj became a reference group for *imitation*, since it was the Vedic practices of this group that the Jatavs tried to imitate in their behaviour, rites, and beliefs. This meant that meat eating and scavenging were to be eschewed, and the practice of the Vedic *samskaras*, especially the sacred thread ceremony (*Janau*), was to be adopted. In other words, they choose the way of Sanskritization to uplift their community from the status of 'untouchable' to touchable. It is significant that the Arya Samaj taught not only the Vedic way of life but also that an individual's caste status was achieved, not ascribed. This was translated by the Jatavs into group action for a change of status for the whole group. The notion of individual achievement and its legitimacy had been planted in the Jatav mind as an awareness of a potential alternative form of social mobility without questioning the caste order.[112]

In the development of the Dalit literature, a significant group of intellectuals belonged to the Jatav community who were associated with the Arya Samaj and they considered themselves Kshatriyas, not untouchables. To strengthen their claim, they utilized the print media and answered those questions which the Jatavs confronted in their public life. For instance, Pandit Sundarlal Sagar,[113] wrote "*Jatav Jivan – Bhag 1*" (the Lives of Jatavs – Part 1) in 1924, which was published by Shri Jatav Maha Sabha, Agra. In 1929, this booklet was again published with a second part and its name was changed to '*Yadav Jivan*' (the Lives of Yadavs). This booklet was written to construct a glorious Jatav history.

[112] Owen M. Lynch; "The Politics of Untouchability: A Case From Agra, India" in B.S. Cohn & Milton (ed.) Structure and Change in Indian Society, Chicago, 1968, pp. 212-217

[113] He was born in a Jatav family in Agra. He got education and joined the Arya Samaj. He was well versed in Sanskrit, therefore, people called him '*pandit*'.

"Hum koun the kya ho gaye, ab to tumhe kuch dyan ho,

Bahu-kal bita gupt rahte bhulo na Yadu santan ho."[114]

> [Who were we, what have we become?\ Now you should pay some attention\ Long time has been spent living in hiding\ don't forget you are the sons of Yadu (dynasty)].[115]

These lines, inscribed on the cover, illustrate the essence of the booklet. The author claimed that the Jatavs [or Yadavs] are the successors of the Yadu dynasty to which God Krishna belonged.[116] The Jatavs were the Kshatriyas. It was established by references by Swami Atma Ram, an Arya Samaj preacher, who wrote '*Gyan Samudra*' (the ocean of knowledge) in 1888. The Jatavs, he said, were really the survivors of the ancient war between Parasurama[117] and the Kshatriyas. The occupations of shoemakers and contractors in building construction sites were adopted as a defense and a disguise to which Jatavs were reduced in order to escape the wrath of Parasurama.[118] "The main reason of the non-availability of our history is the jealousy of Parasurama and his disciples towards the Kshatriya [warriors] race."[119]

The author believed that the Vedas and the Varna system were based on merits of the person concerned and not on his birth. It is interesting that the author argued that the Varna system was prevalent in whole world. However, its nature, he continued, was different according to the social structures of different countries. Our Brahman is called a Professor in other countries. Our Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are called soldier, merchant, and coolie respectively in other countries. There is a difference in names but not in principles.[120] In a noteworthy development, the author declared that the Jatavs were not Hindus at all. Rather, they were the followers

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[114] From the cover page of Sundarlal Sagar; Yadav Jivan, Bhag 1, 2 (the Life of Yadavs, Part 1 & 2), Agra: Shri Jatav Maha Sabha, 1929
[115] Translation mine from Hindi
[116] J. C. Nesfield; Brief View of the Caste System of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Allahabad: North Western Provinces and Agra Government Press, 1885, p. 22
[117] Parasuram was a mythical Brahman and incarnation of God Vishnu who appeared in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. His hostility to Kshatriyas was so great that he alleged to have cleaned the earth of them twenty one times. (Dowson, 1961: 230-31)
[118] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 72
[119] Sundarlal Sagar; Yadav Jivan, Bhag 1, 2 (the Life of Yadavs, Part 1 & 2), Agra: Shri Jatav Maha Sabha, 1929, p. 30 (translation mine from Hindi)
[120] Ibid., p. 45

of the Vedic religion. He considered 'Hindu' as a '*kafir'*, one who believes in many gods.[121] Interestingly, he used Arabic word '*kafir*' which is usually used by Muslims for Hindus. *Kafir* stands for that person who does not follow the path of Muslim religion. But Sundarlal Sagar used this term for Hindus who did not follow the path of Swami Dayanand. The use of this term, itself shows that the Hindus had been polluted and they have forgotten their true religion. Therefore, there is need to restore early Aryanization. Hence, we find there is a negation of Hinduism; however, there is an acceptance of the Vedic religion, which was the result of the influence of the Arya Samaj. They called themselves Aryans instead of Hindus.

Adopting a Brahmanical attitude to legitimize their claim for Kshatriyahood, the author elucidated the word 'Jatav' as derived from 'Yadav'. He constructed a genealogy of their 'great ancestors' and *kulas* (lineages). There were eighteen *kulas* in the Yadu dynasty. These belonged to great kings like Sagar, Maurya, and great *rishis* (sage) like Shiva, Pipil, Harit, Kashyapa etc. In addition, to present the Jatavs as different from untouchables, he maintained that Jatav was not a *jati* (caste) but a lineage. He claimed that *jati* came into existence with the immorality of a particular group. The *jati* is the result of illegal relations between different Varnas. It is also called '*Varnashankar'* (mixed Varna origin). There are seven *jatis* in the Indian society. These are: *Vratya jati* (offspring of an illegal relation within one's own Varna), *Shudra jati* (offspring of unmarried man and woman in Shudra Varna), *Dvi jati* (offspring through *Niyoga* system between man and woman of the Brahman, Kshtraiya and Vaishya Varna), *Anuloma jati* (offspring from illegal relation between high Varna man and low Varna woman), *Pratiloma jati* (offspring from illegal relation between low Varna man and high Varna woman), *Adhama jati* (offspring from illegal relation between two *jatis*), *Matra jati* (offspring from that couple where only mother's name is known). There are further many subdivisions of these *jatis* which came into existence through illicit relationships. However, these *jatis* projected themselves as superior in order to eradicate the transgression of their ancestors. Significantly, the Jatav is not included in this version of *jati* system. They allegedly

[121] Ibid., pp. 32-33

belonged to the '*Jatav Vansh'* (lineage) and their origin was absolutely pious.[122]This was presented to show that the ancestors of the Jatav community were learned and powerful. They had never reportedly associated with any polluted or unclean work.[123] Although they, like the upper castes, tried to separate themselves from the low castes, however, Brahmans rejected their claim to Kshatriyahood.[124]

The Jatavs considered the *Manusmriti* and the *Gita* as their holy scripture. Manu, they claimed, wrote this *smriti* in the period of great king Yadu. The Yadu dynasty produced many warriors like King Yadu, Krishna, Jatayu, Maya, Alha and Udal. But Parasurama's successors distorted their history to render them untouchables and compelled them to live a subjugated life. The author exhorted the Jatavs to come out from 'exile' and use their glorious Yadav title because now there was no fear of enemy Parasurama or his successors.[125]

The second part of this booklet was published in 1929 and both parts were put together in one booklet. Sundarlal Sagar called it '***Yadav Jivan'*** because Jatavs belonged to the Yadav dynasty in their past. In the second part, the symbols and rituals from the birth to after-death have been discussed in detail which further strengthened their claim for Kshatriya Varna. This booklet asserts that a sense of superiority can spread if a glorious history can be produced again.

The Jatavas adopted Brahmanical attitudes to acquire their new social status within the caste system. They were facilitated by the Arya Samaj whose aim was to convert or to bring back the untouchables to the fold of Hinduism. This was initiated by the process of socialization that included an anticipated rise in status.[126] Their contempt towards the Chamar caste and their claim for Kshatriya status can be seen a major development of the Dalit literary discourse.

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[122] Ibid., pp. 46-52
[123] Ibid., pp.25-27
[124] Owen M. Lynch; "The Politics of Untouchability: A Case From Agra, India" in B.S. Cohn & Milton (ed.) Structure and Change in Indian Society, Chicago, 1968, p. 217
[125] Sundarlal Sagar; Yadav Jivan, Bhag 1, 2 (the Life of Yadavs, Part 1 & 2) Agra: Shri Jatav Maha Sabha, 1929, pp. 36-37
[126] Owen M. Lynch; "The Politics of Untouchability: A Case From Agra, India" in B.S. Cohn & Milton (ed.) Structure and Change in Indian Society, Chicago, 1968, p. 216

Conclusion

Since the identity and history of 'the Aryans' was said to be foundational to Indian history there was naturally a considerable interest in the subject. European interest had been kindled by both the investigation on new knowledge through comparative philology as well as the politics of race-science in the age of imperialism, ideas that were thought of as relevant to European history as well. The reaction in India was similar and the theory provoked a variety of ways to explain the beginnings of Indian history. But much beyond that, it provoked very diverse views about Indian society and the political outcome of these views was not only apparent at that time but often continues to this day.[127]

In response to the theory of the Aryan race, Dalit intellectuals argued that they were the original inhabitants of India. They used the print media to strengthen their claim. Swami Acchutanand provided a strong leadership to Dalit intelligentsia. Henceforth, a strong anti-Brahman movement, the Adi Hindu movement, was started in the Hindi speaking belt. In the initial stage of the Dalit print media, the feeling of self-respect and to live with dignity and re-construction of history remained at the forefront of their literature. They used the print media as a culture which made them conscious about the oppression by the Brahmans who were the Aryas and came as invaders. They were the only Brahmans who crafted the caste system to perpetuate their hegemony over the low castes.

The question of identity was another important characteristic for the Jatav intellectuals. Here we find a somewhat separate picture emerges from the print media when this group of non-Brahman intellectuals, laid by Pandit Sundarlal Sagar, claimed that they belonged to the Yadu dynasty. Therefore, they were actually Kshatriyas. Their struggle was directed to achieve the status of a higher Varna within the Hindu social order. In contrast to Swami Acchutanand and other Adi Hindu leaders, the Jatav group was exploring its future within the paradigm of the Brahmanical social framework.

[127] Romila Thapar, The Aryan: Recasting Constructs, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2008, pp. 36-37

Chapter 3

Identity Politics and Dalit Print Culture: 1934-1947

Adhikar lene ke liye, Rankshetra me aaye utar;
Ho vijay kaise nahi? Talwar hai Ambedkar.
Marte-marte bhi yahi 'Nandlal' ki hogi sada;
Rahnuma Daliton ka hai Sardar hai Ambedkar.[1]

[we] have come to the war-field to seize our rights, how cannot [we] win? Because Ambedkar is the sword [for us]/ while we are dying, still Nandlal will pray [for our victory], Ambedkar is the well-wisher and the leader of Dalits.[2]

The Dalit movement underwent a drastic change between the 1930s to the 1940s. In earlier Dalit literature, Dalits were more concerned about proving themselves to be the original inhabitants of India. At the same time, Swami Acchutanand and other Dalit writers spread awareness regarding social, religious and political conditions of their community. After them, a drastic change came into their literature. They became deeply aware about their political situation. Their whole movement now had one major aim: claiming a separate Hindu identity different from that of caste Hindus. The poem above clearly presented a sense of their movement. They were convinced of their victory because now they were united at a national level and they had their national *Sardar* (leader) i.e. Ambedkar. This chapter provide an outline of Dalit struggles to achieve their aims.

In 1933, the movement experienced a heavy loss when its pioneer leader Swami Acchutanand died. It was the time when various leaders in different parts of the UP provided leadership to the Adi Hindu movement. Now a radical change came into their response to the contemporary politics. They were more concerned about national politics, which directly related to them. Swami Acchutanand was not in a position to launch a mass movement because at that time Dalits did not have the necessary political understanding. Acchutanand played a yeoman's role in spreading awareness among them. Therefore, later on, the All India

[1] Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi'; Ambedkar ke Jivan ki Ek Jhanki (A Glimpse into Ambedkar's Life), Allahabad, 1947, p. 4
[2] Translation mine from Hindi

Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF) started a mass movement in 1946 in UP and all over India. Dalit intellectuals began to respond to the issues of freedom from British rule. However, they interpreted freedom differently. For them, it primarily connoted freedom from exploitation by the Brahmanical system, and only after that, from the British rule. They came to know that without political rights, caste Hindus would not allow them to live as human beings. Their association with the Congress or their differences with the Congress became important, especially, in the 1940s when Dalits became worried about their position and rights in independent India. This period has a great significance. The Congress was demanding full independence. The Muslim League was demanding Pakistan. The AISCF was also demanding its separate identity and separate colonies far away from the interference of caste Hindus.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The time span is from 1934 to1947. The first section deals with provincial elections, questions of the representatives of Dalits and their entry into the Congress Cabinet. The second section points out Dalit response to the Second World War and to the Quit India Movement. The third section examines the impact of the Poona Pact and Dalit agitations for its abolition. The forth section brings out the questions of separate identity for Dalits, and the Scheduled Castes' Satyagraha of 1946. The last section explores the reasons of tension between caste Hindus and Dalits. It also analyses the sweepers' unrest; temple entry bills by Congress governments and the question of identifying Scheduled Castes (SCs) and their enumeration in the list of the SCs in 1940s.

These complex sets of inter-related questions are germane to deal together in order to trace the trajectory of the developments in the process of identity politics of Dalits. For example, the ill-effects of the Poona Pact for the Dalit community were made clear by the results of elections. The results provided the rationale for the abolition of the Poona Pact which led the Dalits to agitate for the claim of 'separate element in the national life of India'. Denial of this by the Congress and the British government compelled Dalits to launch their Satyagraha in 1946.

I

Provincial Elections

According to the Government of India Act, 1935, elections for the Provincial Legislatures were held throughout British India. In UP, various political parties contested the elections. Since the Poona Pact, for the first time Dalits came into the political limelight. They became the central point of attraction. It was the time when caste Hindus were claiming that Dalits belonged to them. In UP, 20 seats had been reserved for the SCs in the Legislative Assembly out of 228, for the elections of 1936-37. Four of these were in urban areas (Lucknow, Cawnpore, Agra and Allahabad cities), and the rest were distributed across rural areas. Elections were held in these seats in two phases. In the first phase, there were primary elections and four SC candidates were elected only by the SC electorates. In the second phase, general elections were held and two candidates, finally, were elected by joint electorates, i.e. one SC and other one non-SC.

In the primary elections of 1936 in UP, the Congress, the National Agriculturist Party (NAP) and the Hindu Sabha (HS) emerged as the major political groups. But many independent Dalits also contested elections. The famous Jatav leader, Dr. Manikchand, contested elections for a Legislative Assembly seat from the Agra district (North-West) rural constituency on the NAP ticket.[3] There were total 20 seats in primary elections. On Four, out of these 20 seats, only one candidate for each seat was nominated and hence was elected unopposed. They belonged to Chamar, Shilpkar[4], Kanjar[5], and Pasi[6] castes. In another six seats, the number of nominations did not exceed four. In the remaining ten constituencies, where there were more than four candidates for each constituency, primary elections were

[3] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Sunday, December 20, 1936, p. 5
[4] Shilpkar was a name appropriated by hill tribes in the 1930s who were till recently Doms-an aboriginal race which was broken up to a variety of occupational groups. (Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, NAI, p. 20)
[5] Kanjars were for the most part vagrant criminals, though some of them follow the profession of *Shikari* (hunter) (Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, NAI, p. 20)
[6] The traditional occupation of Pasis was the tapping of palm trees. But they were for the most part labourers and cultivators, and in some areas had criminal propensities. (Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, NAI, p. 20)

held on December 2, 1936. There were 64 candidates for these remaining ten seats, the largest number standing from Cawnpore urban constituency (ten candidates).[7].

After the results of primary elections, five candidates withdrew. In Almora, where other candidates had withdrawn, one of the two candidates who remained had his candidature declared invalid as the result of an election petition .The consequence was that 51 SC candidates contested on 15 SC seats in the general elections on 8 February 1937. The castes of the remaining 51 candidates (who contested in the ten seats) were Chamar 38, Pasi 7, Kori 2, Bhangi 2, Dhobi 1 and Khatik 1. This corresponded closely to the population of the SCs, where out of 10.5 million; over 6 million were Chamars, and nearly 1.5 million Pasis. Koris and Dhobis come next in the list with nearly 0.75 million each.[8]

The Party Affiliation of the 5 Dalit successful candidates and of the 51 Dalit candidates who contested general elections.

Elected Candidates	Contested Candidates	Party
2	18	Congress
3	12	NAP
-	1	Hindu Sabha
-	1	Liberal
-	19	Independent

Source: Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, NAI, p. 27

This election provided a chance to review the politics of caste Hindus that was manifested after the Poona Pact in 1932. That time Gandhi had assured Ambedkar that "no Hindu and no one from Congress would participate directly or indirectly in the elections of untouchables."[9] Despite this assurance, the Congress and caste Hindus participated in the primary elections. Dalits had no political organisation in UP. The Adi Hindu Association was established to carry out social and religious reforms and to spread political awareness among the Depressed Classes. They did not have any political party like Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party in Bombay. Therefore, they were nowhere in comparison to the well-organised

[7] Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, Summary of General Results of Primary Election of Scheduled Caste Candidate, NAI, p. 25
[8] Ibid., p. 26
[9] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 82

Congress party. The Congress had many advantages, as they were well prepared about their election campaigning. In 1936, the Congress declared that it would spend two lakh rupees for the UP Provincial elections.[10] On the other hand, Dalits had to face great difficulties about funds for election campaigning. They did not have organisational or money power. During elections, some Hindi newspapers carried out a series of advertisements and election campaigns in favour of Congress candidates. In these advertisements, short biographies of the Congress candidates were presented to the readers.[11] Dalits had no access to the press and they did not even have resources to access it. But, despite having all advantages, caste Hindus still targeted Dalits and committed atrocities against them. In Basti, they tried their best to prevent Dalits from casting their votes in the election. Same complaints were heard from Allahabad.[12] The United Provinces Congress Committee (UPCC) had taken disciplinary action against 3000 Congressmen.[13] However, it was not mentioned in the Congress papers as to what complaints were made. But there is every possibility that some of the complaints could have been made by the untouchables.

UP Legislative Assembly (1936-37)

Seat	**Candidates**	**Party**	**Primary Elections (1936) Votes**	**General Elections (1937)Votes**	
				SC	**Non-SC**
Lucknow City	Ram Dayal Chamar Narain Das Chamar Bihari Lal Jaiswar Lotan Ram Kori	Cong Cong IND IND	530 336 662 539	246 4,237 (W) 2,233 1,613	Chandra Bhanu Gupta (Cong) 15,799
Cawnpore City	Dayal Das Chamar Jham Lal Chamar Lallo (Sweeper) Dhani Ram Chamar	Cong IND IND IND	1692 497 314 258	9,384 (W) 64 41 1,196	Dr. Jawahar Rohtagi (Cong) 14,392
Agra City	Karan Singh Kane Ram Prasad Ram Prasad Soni Kishan Lal Muni	Cong IND IND IND	No Info. (5 candidates were in the election)	5,407 (W) 1,976 347 809	Seth Achal Singh (Cong) 11,836

[10] Aj (Hindi, Benares); Thursday, October 29, 1936, p. 3
[11] Aj (Hindi, Benares); Wednesday, January 6, 1937, p. 2; Thursday, January 7, 1937, p. 2; Friday, January 8, 1937, p. 2
[12] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), pp. 83-84
[13] All India Congress Committee Papers (hereafter AICC Papers), File No. P-17/ 1947-48, New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and library (hereafter NMML)

Allahabad City	Hari Lal R.S.Shyam Lal Ram Prasad Jaiswar Bachcha Lal	Cong IND IND IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	9,670 (W) 3,796 166 75	P.D. Tandon (Cong) 9,816
Saharanpur District	Ch. BIhari Lal Bahadur	Cong IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	3,252 (W) 648	Th. Pal Singh (Cong) 30,127
Bulandshahar District	Ch. Bhim Sen Arjun Singh Sagar Singh	Cong IND IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	4,400 (W) 1,226 1,139	Th. Manik Singh (Cong) 22,172
Agra District (North-East)	Ganga Dhar Jatav Dr. Manikchand Jatav Vir Khem Chand Kalyan Singh	Cong IND IND IND	No details given	1,239 (W) 1,851* 965 309	Ram Chandra Paliwal (Cong) 19,881
Mainpuri District	Ch. Mizazi Lal Dhanuk Man Singh Jatav Govind Ram Mindai Lal Jatav	Cong IND IND IND	No Info. (6 candidates were in the election)	3,249 (W) 2,236 1,241 954	Pt. J.L. Dwivedi (Cong) 32,509
Budaun District	Lakhan Das Jatav Radhey Lal Kashi Ganesh	Cong IND IND IND	No Info. (6 candidates were in the election)	1,557 (W) 720 1.516 440	Th. R.K. Rathore (Cong) 22,787
Jalaun District	Ch. Lotan Ram Ratna Chamar Raghunath Ram Sahai	Cong IND IND IND	No Info. (7candidates were in the election)	3,791 (W) 3,097 1,724 19	Pt. M.L. Pandey (Cong) 27,484
Mirzapur District	Vishwanath Prasad	Cong	Elec. Unop.	-----	
Gorakhpur District (North)	Puranamasi Chamar Mahadev Pasi Suraj Bali Tappu Ram	Cong IND IND IND	No Info. (5 candidates were in the election)	2,762 (W) 791 24 4	Shibban Lal Saxena (Cong) 24,899
Basti District (South)	Harnath Prasad Chamar	Cong	Elec. Unop.	-----	
Azamgarh District (West)	Gajadhar Prasad Chamar Gulzar Ram	Cong IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	949 196	S.R. Asthana (Cong) 32,012
Almora District	Munshi Khushi Ram Munshi Ram Prasda Tamta	Cong IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	Election declared void. Munshi R.P. Tamta was elected unopposed.	
Rae Bareli District (North-East)	Bhawani Pasi	IND	Elec. Unop.	Elec. Unop.	

Sitapur District (North-West)	Pragi Lal Moti Lal Madari Lal	Cong IND IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	12,535 (W) 920 35	Pt. S.R. Dwivedi (Cong) 47,420
Fyzabad District (East)	Paltu Ram Mahant Jakhan Das	Cong IND	No Info. (5 candidates were in the election)	5,571 (W) 22	Pt. K.N. Kaul (Cong) 59,901
Gonda District (North-East)	R.S. Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta	IND	Elec. Unop.	Elec. Unop.	
Bara Banki District (North)	Chet Ram Ram Sahai Pasi Bhajan Singh Naipal	Cong IND IND IND	Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop. Elec. Unop.	8,026 (W) 7,236 32 15	Rajmata Parati Kumari (NAP) 32,700

Source: P.D. Reeves, B.D. Graham & J.M. Goodman; A Handbook to Elections in UP 1920-1951, Delhi: Manohar, 1975, pp. 254-314 (Abbreviation: Cong: Congress, IND: Independent, Elec. Unop.- Elected Unopposed, No. Info.: No information of voting, (W): winning Candidate)

* In the primary election, Jatav Vir Manikchand filed his nomination as an independent candidate. Later on, in general election, he fought election as an NAP candidate.

The election results went in favour of the Congress. The Congress got 16 seats, including three seats where there was no opposition. The NAP won three seats without opposition. It was interesting that in primary elections, Dalits came out successful as independent candidates, later they turned towards the NAP. It was most probably because they fought against the Congress. The Hindu Sabha was a party of conservative caste Hindus. Therefore, the NAP emerged as a suitable option for them. Along with this, one independent candidate also secured his seat from Almora.[14]

In this election, three points emerged. First, the Congress was not serious about Dalit candidates in reserved seats. Therefore, Congress Dalit Candidates got few votes in comparison with Non-SC Congress candidates in general elections. Dalits, in the words of Ambedkar, expressed their 'foolishness' by filing many nominations for one seat. Therefore, the Congress candidates could secure their position in the primary elections. Prima-facie, it seems that Dalits were behind the Congress as it won the majority of seats. However, looked at subtly, in fact, nominations of many independent candidates also expressed their

[14] Home – Political – File No. 129/37-Poll, Return Showing the Results of Elections in India, 1937, Received from the India Office, NAI, pp. 55-62; Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, Summary of General Results of Primary Election of Scheduled Caste Candidate, NAI, p. 27

uneasiness with the Congress. The Congress contested the elections strategically and thus was well rewarded for its 'prudent' moves. They declared only one candidate for the primary elections, except for the Lucknow City seat. On the other hand, Dalit independent candidates did the opposite. Therefore, their votes were distributed and, consequently, they could not give a tough fight to the Congress.

At the national level, the Congress claimed that it was the real representative of the Depressed Classes because it won 78 seats out of 151 seats reserved for the SCs. Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party got 15 seats.[15] Ambedkar provided the data related to the elections.

Province	Voting by Untouchables Voters (1937)		
	In Favour of Congress	Against Congress	Total of Untouchable votes cast in the Election
UP	52,609	79,571	132,180
Madras	126,152	195,464	321,616
Bengal	59,646	624,797	684,443
CP	12,971	158,076	171,047
Bihar	8,654	22,187	30,841
Punjab	Nil	69,126	69,126
Assam	5,320	22,437	27,757
Orissa	5,878	8,707	14,585
Total	290,737	1,295,719	1,586,456

Source: Vasant Moon (ed.) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. 9, Bombay: Education Department, 1991, p. 156

These statics clear the picture of the Congress' claim. Applying these figures, it is clear that out of 1,586,456 votes only 290,737 i.e. eighteen percent have been cast in favour of the Congress. Eighty-two percent have been cast against the Congress.[16] In fact, the Congress won only 38 seats with SCs' votes out of a total of 151 reserved for the SCs. It failed to win 73 seats. In 13 seats it won due to caste Hindu Votes, 8 as a result of a split due

[15] Dhananjay Keer; Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1954 (3rd edition 1971), p. 292

[16] Vasant Moon (ed.) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. 9, Bombay: Education Department, 1991, p. 156

to too many untouchables standing against the Congress untouchable candidates and 19 on account of the 'foolishness' of the untouchables in not taking sufficient interest in the election on the seats reserved for them.[17] Thus, it is ample clear that Dalits did not always favour the Congress.

After the 1937 elections, the Harijan Sevak Sangh of Delhi made a representation to the UP Government to abolish the cumulative system[18] of voting for SCs for the UP Legislative Assembly seats. The Congress Ministry was clearly in favour of abolishing the cumulative vote and it considered the representation. But no final decision could be taken before the Ministry resigned. After this, there was nothing to show that the recognised leaders of the SCs actually wanted any change.[19] The system continued to exist. Nevertheless, this move clearly indicated that caste Hindus did not want to give any 'extra' rights to Dalits, which could ameliorate their conditions. The motive was to stop untouchables from being united. Therefore, they would use the cumulative voting system as their weapon to win their seats and it would remove their political indifferences. Because there were two groups: the Congress untouchables and non-Congress untouchables.

The second Provincial elections were held in 1945-46. This time, Dalits were organised better in contrast to 1936-37 elections. The AISCF was established as a central political organisation for Dalits in 1942. Its objects were: the attainment of a status i.e. Dalits as "distinct and separate element in the national life of India, and to help them to obtain their political, economic, and social rights."[20] P.N. Rajbhoj, General Secretary of the AISCF, appealed to Dalits that, "it is the duty of every of the SCs to join the Federation and support its candidates in the forthcoming elections. The SCs should take note of the activities of the Congress and the forthcoming elections would prove crucial from the point of view of their political future."[21]

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[17] Ibid., p. 158

[18] In this system, one voter has right to cast his two votes either one candidate or he can cast votes for two different candidates at the same time.

[19] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 16/40-R, Proposed Abolition of the Cumulative System of Voting for Scheduled Caste Seats in the UP Legislative Assembly, NAI, p. 5

[20] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.14 & Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi'; Ambedkar ke Jivan ki Ek Jhanki (A Glimpse into Ambedkar's Life), Allahabad, 1947, pp. 8-9

[21] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Saturday, December 8, 1945, p. 11

Dalits were very deeply concerned about the election pattern of the Second General Election. They did not want elections under the guidance of the Poona Pact, as the Pact did not help Dalits in the first general election. Therefore, many resolutions and appeals were sent to the British Government regarding the abolition of the Pact. For example, the Punjab Provincial Chamar Maha-Sabha, Lahore, sent a resolution to the Governor of the Punjab regarding the Pact. The resolution stated, " the Pact was signed for a period of ten years in the first instance. The period has been expired now. Our Constitutional position was to be reviewed again for a period of ten years, but the Dalits were not satisfied with the Pact. Therefore, they requested Your Honour to repeal this nasty enactment at once. The experience gained during this decade has rather been sad and we repudiate this compromise and request Your Excellency not to hold our elections under this scheme and compromise which is prejudicial and inimical to our political interests. The so-called *Swaraj* would not recede back if we are given our political rights quite separately like those of Muslims and Sikhs."[22] For Dalits, the Pact was a conspiracy of caste Hindus to prevent Dalit political representation.

However, the Government did not abolish the Poona Pact. The second general elections were held under the parameters of the Pact in February 1937. In the second primary elections, out of 20 seats reserved for UP Legislative Assembly, nine seats were filled unopposed by Congress candidates. All these nine seats had only one candidate each and all these seats were in rural areas.[23] This happened because the UPSCF did not contest the rural SC seats.[24] It wanted to focus on urban seats first because they did not have enough leadership and resources to cover all UP at once. In the next eight seats, there were no primary elections because there were only four or even less candidates. Elections happened in three seats only i.e. Agra City, Allahabad city and Almora district. For Agra city's urban seat, 11 candidates had contested. Four belonged to the Congress, five were from the SCF, one each from the Hindu Mahasabha and the All India Depressed Classes League.

[22] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/6/45-R, Representation from the Punjab Provincial Chamar Maha-Sabha Regarding the Revision of Poona Pact, NAI, p. 3
[23] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 94/3/45-R, Results of Elections to Provincial Legislatures, 1945-46, NAI, p. 9
[24] P.D. Reeves; "Changing Patterns of Political Alignment in the General Elections to the United Provinces Legislative Assembly, 1937 and 1946", Modern Asian Studies, 5, 2, (1971), p. 137

UP Assembly Elections (1945-46)

Seats	Candidates	Party	Primary Elections (1945) Votes	General Elections Votes (1946) SC	Non-SC
Lucknow City	Narain Das	Cong	Elec. Unop.	14,110	Chandra Bhanu Gupta (Cong) 24,614
	Chamar	SCF	Elec. Unop.	175	
	Ram Charan	SCF	Elec. Unop.	134	
	Mewa Lal Bhola	SCF	Elec. Unop.	90	
Cawnpore City	Bhagwan Din Mehtar	Cong	Elec. Unop.	34,782	Dr. Jawahar Rohtagi (Cong) 34,550
	Piare Lal	SCF	Elec. Unop.	8,736	
Agra City	Ram Chandra Sehara	Cong	836	16,343	Seth Achal Singh (Cong) 17,446
	Pyare Lal	HS	452	16	
	Karan Singh Kane	SCF	744	9,523	
	Ram Narain	SCF	682	68	
Allahabad City	Masuria Din	Cong	1,701	10,870	P.D. Tandon (Cong) 19,870
	R.S.Shyam Lal	SCF	674	108	
	Prabhu Dayal	SCF	361	84	
	Kallan	SCF	358	49	
Rae Bareli District (North-East)	Dayal Das Bhagat	Cong	Elec. Unop.	1,889	S.B. Singh (Cong) 15,917
	Badloo Ram	SCF	Elec. Unop.	272	
	Sonkar				
Sitapur District (North-West)	Pragi Lal	Cong	Elec. Unop.	20,204	G.N. Saxena (Cong) 28,665
	Narain Pasi	SCF	Elec. Unop.	621	
Almora District	Khushi Ram	Cong	937	20,605	Pt. Har Govind Pant (Cong) 36,371
	Kamalva	Cong	309	36	
	Ram Prasad Tamta	KSS	1,438	41	
	Hari Prasad Tamta	KSS	212	65	

Source: Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 94/4/45-R, Statics Relating to the Elections to the Central and Provincial Legislative Assembly, NAI, pp. 135-37 & 431-42; AICC Papers, File No. ED-1 KW II/1946, NMML; P.D. Reeves, B.D. Graham & J.M. Goodman; A Handbook to Elections in UP 1920-1951, Delhi: Manohar, 1975, pp. 315-362 (Abbreviation:- Cong: Congress, SCF: Scheduled Castes Federation, Independent, Elec. Unop.: Elected Unopposed, KSS: Kumaun Shilpkar Sabha)

The Congress secured all the seats, which were reserved for SCs. Out of a total of 20 seats, the Congress candidates filled nine seats unopposed during primary elections. The final elections were held for the remaining 11 seats and these were also won by the Congress. It is important to note that in the primary elections, Congress candidates secured less than a thousand votes. There was only one exception; Masuria Din (Congress) got 1701 votes for Allahabad city's urban seat. However, in the final election, the majority of Congress SC

candidates got more than ten thousand votes. Masuria Das got six times more votes in the final election than the primary election. In Agra city urban seat, Ram Chand (Congress) secured 16,343 votes, nineteen times more votes in comparison with his 836 votes in the primary election. In Almora district, rural seat, Khushi Ram (Congress) managed to get 20,605 votes in respect of his 937 votes in primary election. He got twenty two times more votes in the final election. On the other hand, candidates who were not affiliated to the Congress got almost the same number of votes in the primary and in the final elections. It perfectly means caste Hindus did not cast their votes for non-Congress Dalits. They gave their votes to puppet candidates of the Congress.

This was not limited to UP only, but it also spread in other provinces. For example, in the 1937 elections, in the Central Provinces, an independent candidate who secured the highest number of votes in the primary election and another candidate who was backed by the Congress 'secretly' stood fourth in panel of four but in the general election this independent candidate lost the election and Congress backed candidate came out successfully.[25] He won the seat with the votes of caste Hindus. This clearly indicated that, despite being elected in the polls, the Congress candidates did not really represent the SCs. They won the elections with the help of the majority of caste Hindus' votes who polled their votes only to the puppet candidates of the Congress.[26] Therefore, the Poona Pact brought fruitful results to the Congress and to Gandhi. During the discussion on the Pact in 1932, Gandhi recommended a 'Panel of five' untouchables in the primary elections while Tej Bahadur Sapru wanted three and Ambedkar was in favour of two untouchables only. Gandhi wanted to keep the numbers high because if there would be more candidates in primary elections then it would be easy to have at least one as puppet candidate of the Congress. At last, after much pressure Ambedkar accepted the 'Panel of four'.[27] However, even the scheme of the 'Panel of four' worked against Dalits. Now they had to secure all four positions in primary election in order to elect their 'genuine' candidate. In this situation, their votes were distributed unevenly among their 'genuine' candidates and Congress candidates got a chance to be elected in the primary

[25] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 111/41-R, Letter from G.M. Thaware, Secretariat of All India Depressed Classes Association to Mr. Gandhi regarding the Condition of Depressed Classes after Poona Pact, NAI, p. 2

[26] Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Private Papers (Hereafter BRAPP), Reel No. 2, File No. 9, Grievances of the SCs by Ambedkar, at NMML

[27] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), pp. 90-92

election. In the final elections, they easily 'secured' the seats because of caste Hindus' votes. Therefore, they won those seats that they did not represent in any real sense.

It is important to note that there was a strong opposition regarding the pattern of the general election from the SCF in UP. For example, the Lucknow city, reserved seat for SCs, was left uncontested by SCF in protest of the Poona Pact. There was a meeting of the District SCF in Lucknow under the leadership of Jwala Prasad on March 6, 1946. This meeting resolved, "so long as the Poona Pact remains operative and the organised machinery of the caste Hindus, viz., the Congress, continues to interfere with the SC election, there is absolutely no possibility of a genuine SC candidate being returned to the Legislature against puppet candidates set up by the Congress. It is therefore hereby resolved that the idea of contesting the final election for the general constituency of the Lucknow city be dropped and Mewalal Sonkar, Ram Charan Kureel and Bhola Mistri Pasi who were set up by the Federation to contest the election, should refrain from fighting the election as a protest against the Poona Pact."[28] We find they 'got' less than hundred votes. It proves that they did not campaign for general elections. Otherwise, Lucknow was a stronghold of the UPSCF. If they would have fought general election, then there would have been a tough fight between the UPSCF and the Congress as it was the case in Cawnpore.

These elections were not free from violence and atrocities against Dalits. Incidents of violence proved the fact that caste Hindus still were not ready for the political empowerment of Dalits. For example, there was trouble in the Agra College polling booth where some caste Hindu supporters attacked the opposition party candidate.[29] In Allahabad, a man received knife wounds while brickbats were thrown several times at the polling booths when SC voters went to the polls in the primary elections.[30] Four people were killed and about 100 injured because of clashes between the supporters of the Congress and SC candidates during the polling for two seats from Cawnpore city general urban constituency.[31] Congressmen used brickbats and *lathis* freely at the polling stations of the Agra Cantonment Board and Collectorate, against SC workers.[32] A furious mob of Congressmen raided and set fire to 14 SC houses at Wazirpura Basti in Agra city on the morning of March 13, 1946, as a sequel to

[28] Dawn (English, Delhi); Tuesday, March 12, 1946, p. 8
[29] Dawn (English, Delhi), Saturday, December 1, 1945, p. 8
[30] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, January 15, 1946, p. 8
[31] Dawn (English, Delhi), Wednesday, January 13, 1946, p. 1
[32] Dawn (English, Delhi), Friday, March 15, 1946, p. 6

the election contest. The house of the prominent Jatav leader Dr. Manikchand was looted by caste Hindus. The loss was estimated about Rs. 35,000. On the same evening, hooligans raided several houses of the SCs at Rajamandi in Agra city and injured many persons including some old women. The hooligans at Sadar polling booths smashed the SCF flags, which were carried by a car. Congressmen used shook tactics to scare away the poor and illiterate 'Harijans'.[33] In an editorial of the *Dawn*, the newspaper commented that the responsibility for the election clashes and the consequent injuries and deaths must be placed on the Congress... Its claim to speak for entire Hindu India has been exploded."[34]

These instances of violence and atrocities raised many questions regarding the practices and principles of the Congress. On the one hand, the Congress upheld non-violent Satyagraha, but on the other hand, it used all 'possible' ways and tools, from fast unto death to *lathies*, knife and fire, to suppress the already suppressed untouchables. The intention of the Congress towards SCs was not free from prejudices. It seems that the Congress was somehow scared of the awakened and united SC politics. It is possible that because of Congress hooliganism, the voting percentage was lowered down to 25.2 percent in Second Primary election of 1945-46 in UP from 41 percent in the First Primary election of 1936-37.[35]

Representatives of Dalits

The question of who were the real representatives of Dalits again rose in the 1930s and it reached a peak point during 1946 and 1947. Gandhi and the Congress claimed that they were the real representatives of the Dalits. After the Poona Pact, Gandhi started working for the upliftment of Dalits. He suggested the formation of the All India Anti-Untouchability League in 1932. G.D. Birla was appointed the first President. The League resolved that "henceforth no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public roads and other public institutions..."[36] The League was subsequently renamed

[33] Dawn (English, Delhi), Saturday, March 16, 1946, p. 6
[34] Dawn (English, Delhi), Saturday, March 16, 1946, p. 4
[35] Reforms Office – Franchise – File No. 20/IV/36-F, Summary of General Results of Primary Election of Scheduled Caste Candidate, NAI, p. 27; Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 94/4/45-R, Statics Relating to the Elections to the Central and Provincial Legislative Assembly, NAI, p. 298
[36] The All India Anti-Untouchability League: Aims and Objects, Scheme of Propaganda and Uplift Work, Budget and Constitution, Delhi: Birla Mills, Subjimandi, 1932, pp. 1-2

as Harijan Sevak Sangh on October 26, 1932. One of the main objects behind the constitution of the Sangh, was that "it shall be the eradication, by truthful and non-violent means, of untouchability in Hindu society with all its incidental evils and disabilities, suffered by the so-called untouchables in all walks of life and to secure for them absolute equality of status with the rest of the Hindus."[37] It is important to note, despite the foundation of the Sangh, there was no 'change in the heart' among caste Hindus. Dalits remained oppressed and suppressed, as they were earlier. They were living in the same old conditions.[38] This can be inferred from many instances. For example, the legal battle for the opening of the Mahad tank continued in the High Court of Bombay until 1937 when finally Dalits won the case. In UP, there was a series of atrocities on Dalits during the Provincial elections. Even, Jagjivan Ram, Congress Dalit leader, argued that the Congressmen only notionally accepted Harijans as equals.[39] There was not a single instance where caste Hindus abandoned their so-called social and religious privileges. Therefore, it would be correct to say, in words of a Dalit leader, G.N. Thoray that "in order to capture the votes of the untouchables, the Sangh has been started by Mr. Gandhi."[40]

Gandhi termed Dalit uplift movement as the 'Harijan movement'. Despite all the efforts of Gandhi, there was no transformation in the conditions of Dalits. The Congress claimed that the real objective of the Harijan movement was the removal of untouchability from India. But Dalit intellectuals like Purusottam Dass Kureel had a different viewpoint. He was the General Secretary of the UP Chamar Sabha, Cawnpore and Organising Secretary of the United Provinces SCF (UPSCF) in 1947. He considered that the Harijan movement "does not aim at the real progress of the Harijans. It is certain that the previously mentioned programme cannot remove untouchability. The reasons for his statement are obvious. First, the nature and kind of untouchability, which Mahatma Gandhi wishes to eradicate from root to branches, is not alike in every part of the country. Secondly, this Harijan movement has nothing to do with their education, prosperity and equality of rights, which are, according to the educated and sound thinkers of the country and outside, the only ways for the removal of the cancer of untouchability. Thirdly, the Hindu scriptures are responsible for the creation and maintenance of such an outlook among the so-called high caste Hindus. These scriptures

[37] Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (including Explanatory Notes and Bye-laws), Delhi: Harijan Industrial Home, 1935, pp. 3-4
[38] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Friday, September 17, 1937, p. 3
[39] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, June 21, 1946, p. 1
[40] Home – Public – File No. 346/34-Pub, Request of the All India Depressed Classes Association for the Nomination of three Members of their Community to the Legislative Assembly, NAI, p. 4

have mentioned the full doctrine of the *Varna Vyawastha* (Varna order). The image of Pandits, Katha-readers, Brahman poets, writers and dramatists, could have only come out of the mental outlook of Hindus if these scripts, which hold a portion of humanity in everlasting bondage and disgrace, were put on fire at a public place. We cannot even dream of such a thing in the removal of untouchability programme of Gandhi. Therefore, it is as clear as daylight that untouchability could not be removed by the anti-untouchability movement of Gandhi."[41] With the coming of 1947, Dalits became fed up with the Congress and Gandhi's initiatives. They arrived at a decision that "the present-day movement of Mahatma Gandhi, which is unnecessary and dangerous will cause loss to the SCs, so should be strongly boycotted by the SCs brethren, expressing no faith in Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress."[42]

The anti-Untouchability movement of the Congress was not purely religious and social. It had various implications but most importantly, there were political motives behind this movement. The Congress started this movement only when their political movements (Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements) failed. Then to gain political power and to increase their mass base, they launched anti-untouchability campaigns to incorporate Dalits in the 'national' movement. Kureel further said that the "underlying idea of the Harijan movement was the purification of high castes. If it is like so, then it is proper to call it either by the name of '*Hindu Changing of Heart Society*' or '*Purification of Dwija Souls Society*' or '*Savarna Hindu Mental Change Society*'. To call it '*Harijan Movement*' or '*Anti-Untouchability Society*' is to deceive the world and to burden the SC with this unreal obligation."[43]

Therefore, the real conditions of the SCs did not change after the Poona Pact and Gandhi's Harijan movement. Before Gandhi's 'initiatives' a caste Hindu barber was not ready to shave a SC member. Caste Hindus were not willing to let out their houses to be occupied by the SCs. These classes had to practice their so-called traditional professions alone. Caste Hindus were not ready to engage untouchables as their domestic servants. In their estates Munims, Kamdars, Havaldars and Managers were not recruited from them. There were restrictions on their entrance into hotels, temples and wells, restrictions on sitting side by side in shops, bullock carts and other places where the Hindus and Muslims sit

[41] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p. 16
[42] Ibid., p. 16
[43] Ibid., p. 14

together. Their material position was also bad. During a term of nearly ten years since the Poona Pact down to October 29, 1941 the SCs found absolutely no change and their position remained the same as it was before the Pact. Whatever advancement was made, it was made by the SCs themselves.[44] So, a Congress government in UP did not change the caste situation at all.

The ninth annual conference of the UP Depressed Classes was held in Aligarh from October 13 to 15, 1934 under the presidency of Dr. Dharma Prakash of Bareilly. This conference passed *inter alia,* a resolution supporting the proposal of G.N. Thoray of Nagpur, Assistant General Secretary of the All India Depressed Classes Association. The resolution was sent to Gandhi and it demanded that at least five representatives of the Depressed Classes should be sent to the Councils. The original proposal by Thoray was addressed to the Home Member, Government of India. The resolution described the deplorable political conditions of the Depressed Classes. "It is well known fact that they are not able to elect members of their own community to the Indian Legislative Assembly as the number of voters in their community is, due to their poor economic status, small. Moreover, such few of them who possess the necessary property and other qualifications are not supported by caste Hindus. No member of the community has ever elected to the Legislative Assembly or one of the Provincial Legislatures."[45]

The resolution, further, pointed out that Thoray had written to Gandhi (Congress), Pandit Madan Malaviya (Nationalist Party), Bhai Parmanand (Hindu Maha Sabha) and Seth G.D. Birla (Harijan Sevak Sangh), "requesting them to adopt a small number of five Depressed Classes candidates on the behalf of their organisations to the elections for the Indian Legislative Assembly... Not one of these organisers or the organisations, they represent, adopted a single candidate of the Depressed Classes in the whole of India. It is perfectly clear from this that none of these organisations have any genuine feeling for the Depressed Classes. They only want to exploit the Depressed Classes for their own purposes."[46] This undoubtedly exposed the 'politics' of the Congress and caste Hindus. It was

[44] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 111/41-R, Letter from G.M. Thaware, Secretariat of All India Depressed Classes Association to Mr. Gandhi regarding the Condition of Depressed Classes after Poona Pact, NAI, p. 2
[45] Ibid., p. 3
[46] Ibid., p. 4

important to note that Dr. Prakash was the member of the All India Depressed Classes League. Thoray's resolution was particularly important. It showed that despite the Congress' stated principles, nothing concrete had been done. His demands were very close to the demands of the Adi Hindu Association. Further, it seemed if there would have no Communal Award or the Poona Pact, then it was perfectly clear that Depressed Classes would not get any chance to be elected to the Legislature Assembly.

The Congress was trying to incorporate Dalits into their movement. Therefore, they raised issues of removal of untouchability and other social problems. Nevertheless, they did not adopt any concrete method to erode their grievances. Acharya J.P. Kriplani, General Secretary of AICC, wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Jat Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore, regarding the policy of the Congress regarding untouchables and their problems. He wrote, "The Congress policy has so far confined to the removal of untouchability in all spheres and forms. Our belief is that once untouchability is removed from Hinduism, the caste system will automatically disappear. To raise the question of caste system on the platform of the Congress would be not to unite but to divide them further by raising a fresh controversy."[47] The Congress had made abolition of untouchability one of its principal planks in 1920 and Gandhi had thrown himself with all his powers and energy to the movement. But "the Depressed Classes do not believe in it."[48] Rao Saheb Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta categorically argued in a lecture at UP Dalits' Education Meet in Lucknow in 1934, "Gandhi's Harijan movement was not in favour of Dalits. There was no progress in the movement. If anyone claimed that there was social, economic and education development had happened for Dalits, that person was misleading himself."[49] Caste Hindus were showing that the Congress had sympathy with Dalits, but they were unable to take drastic and crucial steps to annihilate the caste system because it can hamper, as they claimed, the unity of India and progress of freedom struggle.

Dalits were very concerned about the Congress Ministry's resignation and the subsequent political deadlock in 1939-40. To end this, there was a possibility of a dialogue among Indian political parties. At this stage, Dalits wanted to present their viewpoint

[47] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Friday, December 22, 1939, p. 10
[48] Home – Public – File No. 346/34-Pub, Request of the All India Depressed Classes Association for the Nomination of three Members of their Community to the Legislative Assembly, NAI, p. 3
[49] A lecture (in Hindi) delivered by Rao Saheb Munshi Hari Prasad Tamta argued at UP Dalits' Education Meet in Lucknow on November 28, 1934 (translation mine from Hindi)

regarding future agreements. Consequently, the UP Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association, Cawnpore, had written a letter to M.A. Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League "to represent the interests of the members of this [Adi Hindu] Association in any settlement that may be reached with Congress" in 1939.[50] Jinnah accepted their demands. But there is no further information available on his acceptance.

A mass meeting of the Adi Hindu Depressed Classes was held at Devan Shariff in Lucknow on November 2, 1939 under the Presidency of Ram Sahai, M.L.C. The meeting resolved that "the Depressed Classes support Ambedkar and they believe that Ambedkar is the only representative of the Depressed Classes. The meeting further requested Jinnah that during the talks with Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad as well as with His Excellency the Viceroy, he should not forget to put up the care of the minorities."[51] This demonstrates that the Dalits did not believe in Gandhi and his Congress. Therefore, they did not approach them. Communication with Jinnah showed that Dalits would do anything to secure their rights. Further, they were showing their discontent over Gandhi's Harijan movement. This development was particularly important when they had crossed the religious barriers.

The Working Committee of the UP Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association, Cawnpore, resolved that the Committee empowered Ambedkar to take decisions on their behalf and assured him the support and co-operation of the Depressed Classes of the UP.[52] In 1941, the Congress launched an individual Satyagraha movement to make it clear that they were not with the British government in the War efforts. In the same year, Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu published a booklet entitled "*Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand*" (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human Society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'). The publication at this time revealed that Dalits were still not represented by the Congress in UP. There were frequent claims from the Congress and the Adi Hindu leaders regarding who was the real representative of the Dalits. This booklet apprehended that after the Poona Pact, there were very little chances for true representatives of Dalits to win the

[50] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Wednesday, October, 11, 1939, p. 9
[51] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Friday, November 3, 1939, p. 3
[52] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, November 2, 1939, p. 4

election. The way to win had become easy for the puppet candidates of the Congress.[53] The theme of booklet made it clear that a large section of the Dalits was not under the influence of the Congress leadership. Further, it exposed the misdeeds of the Aryans towards the original inhabitants of India. The theme of the imposition of the Aryan culture and slavery upon Dalits still carried immense importance. The author claimed that the Aryans destroyed the golden history of the original inhabitants. Therefore, the Dalits have forgotten their 'real history' and that is why they were reduced to the bottom of the society, even ousted from the society.

Adi – Nivasi bandhu! Lijiye, Yeh nij gauravmay itihaas;

Arya-dwijon ne swarth-vivash ho, jise kar diya tha nash.

Padiye ise tham nij hiye ko, dhariye man me bhari dheer;

Shock-Sindhu me doob na rahiye, hariye nij janni ki peer.[54]

Adi – Nivasi brother! Take this glorious history of yours, which was ruined by the Aryans for their vested interest/ Read it with holding your heart and keep patience in [your] mind; Do not remain in the ocean of shock, [wake up] and remove the grievances of your mother.[55]

P.N. Rajbhoj, General Secretary of the AISCF, claimed that "with awakening of the minorities like Muslims and the SCs, the Congress can no more boast of representing these communities, therefore its claims to represent the whole country, goes in the wind."[56] It was clear that the Congress was not the friend of Dalits. It is further clarified with the fact that the "Congress never gave a seat of its Working Committee to a member of the SCs. There was hardly anything done for the amelioration of the conditions of the so-called Harijans."[57]

[53] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 37 & Ram Chander Banoudha; Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh (Life Struggle of Ambedkar), Allahabad 1st edition, 1947(3rd edition by Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh, 2005), p. 129

[54] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, p. 9

[55] Ibid. (translation mine from Hindi)

[56] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Friday, June 29, 1945, p. 3

[57] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Wednesday, July 4, 1945, p. 9

Tilak Chand Kureel, General Secretary of the UP Depressed Classes Association also said in a meeting of the Depressed Classes in Cawnpore that "we have no faith in Gandhi and in the Congress which stands for a *Hindu Raj* and does not want to give us our proper place in the constitution. Similarly, we cannot depend on Jinnah who is only advocating the case of his community despite his promise to watch our interests. We will have, therefore, to stand on our own legs." [58] He further explained in detail the programme of the AISCF, emphasised the need for unity, and suggested that there should be one organisation with only one leader to safeguard and protect the interests of the community. The issue of a real leader also remained important in 1947 when Purusottam Dass Kureel asserted that the SCs were solidly behind Ambedkar and had complete faith in his leadership and his ceaseless fight for securing our political rights. Kureel exhorted misguided Dalits to know their real leader through his [Ambedkar's] books. "Any man who has got a little brain has cared to read his books, in which he has very strongly condemned caste and has got not the least sympathy for those who observe caste distinctions."[59]

The years 1946 and 1947 were very important in the history of Dalit print culture. Because in 1946, Shankranand Shastri published his famous booklet "*Poona Pact Banam Gandhi*" (Poona Pact versus Gandhi) from Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, Lucknow, in 1946. The booklet wrote a critical history of the Poona Pact and its impact upon Dalits. The author blamed 'Gandhi and his company' for the exploitation of Dalits and accused his Congress for the lack of progress in the conditions of Dalits. This booklet is still quite popular among Dalit readers and that is proved from its latest 15th revised edition, which was published by the Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow, in 2005. In 1947, two booklets on the life of Ambedkar were published from Allahabad. First, Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi' has written "*Ambedkar ke Jivan ki Ek Jhanki*" (A glimpse of life of Ambedkar) from Allahabad in 1947. Second booklet "*Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh*" (Life struggle of Ambedkar), was penned by Ram Chander Banoudha. The third edition of this booklet was published from Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh in 2005 which illustrated its continued popularity among Dalits.

[58] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Sunday, August 9, 1942, p. 10
[59] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.18

Representation of Dalits in the Congress Cabinet

After winning the elections, the Congress formed their government in seven provinces in 1937. The Congress also won 16 seats reserved for the SCs in UP. However, there was not a single instance where Dalits were included in the Congress Ministry. According to C.P. Jigyasu, "the Adi Hindus of India (Dalits and other Low castes) formed the majority in India. Despite this fact, their representation was very small in the government."[60] Ambedkar said in a press statement that the representation of minorities in the Cabinet was the live issue between the Congress and the minorities at the Round Table Conference. The minorities insisted that the right of representation should be guaranteed by a clause in the Constitution. The Congress insisted that it should be left to convention. Ultimately, a *via media* was found and a clause was inserted in the instrument of Instructions to Governors directing them to see that the minorities were given adequate representation. Unfortunately, the Congress which swept the polls, made a condition before the accepting office that Governors should not use their discretionary powers, which were largely connected with the protection of minorities. They asked Governors to write off these powers in advance without caring to see what effect such a stand would have upon the minorities. This was a gross breach of faith on the part of the Congress and this was responsible for the rise of the Muslim League and the growth of distrust between the minorities and the Hindu majority in India.[61]

Dalits demanded the Cabinet seat because it could help with their political and economic problems. But Gandhi opposed the entry of Dalits into Congress Cabinets and laid down some rules and regulations for being a Minister. In 1942, when a Dalit asked Gandhi regarding the inclusion of Dalits in the Cabinets with Congress majority Legislative Assemblies, Gandhi replied to him on August, 2, 1942 in the '*Harijan*' that "this is dangerous. I will not support it. To be a Minister, depends on one's character, ability and his popularity among people."[62] This means those Dalits, who won on the Congress' tickets, did

[60] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, pp. 38-39 (this fact was based on a newspaper Samta (Hindi, Almora), March 24, 1937)

[61] The Hindu (English, Madras), November 18, 1942; Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 163/40-R, Resolution Passed by Muslim League in 1940 on Pakistan and Attitude of Various Organisations, NAI, p. 150

[62] B.R. Ambedkar (translated in Hindi by Shrivardhan); Congress Aur Gandhi Ne Acchuton Ke Liye Kya Kiya (What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables), Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, p. 68 (translation mine from Hindi)

not possess the qualities for being a Minister. He also laid down educational qualifications for holding a Ministerial rank. But the Congress selected only those Dalits who did not possess the educational qualifications. Therefore, Ambedkar's statement was correct: the Congress was giving tickets to illiterate untouchables to fill their numbers. Gandhi and the Congress were not in favour of sending the effective and educated representatives of the untouchables.[63]

The situation did not change until the eve of independence. In 1946 also, Dalits were not considered fit to be a Minister in a Cabinet. A Conference of the Depressed Classes was held at Mankua in Bijnor district in 1946. Several resolutions were passed regarding the social, political and economic uplift of the Depressed Classes. Choudhry Girdhari Lal, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, UP attended the Conference. On the resolution regarding the inclusion of a Depressed Class Minister in the Cabinet, Girdhari Lal "advised the audience to work for the removal of the poverty, social exploitation and civic disabilities of the Depressed Classes rather than fritter their energies in demanding a Depressed Class Minister."[64] He also pointed out that Zamindari that was a cause behind the exploitation of these Depressed Classes would soon be abolished, as also untouchability. He advised them to give some time to the Ministry to work and then if their demands were not fulfilled, they should agitate.[65] The Congress had formed its government in UP between 1937 and 1939. Therefore, the question arises that if they were sincere about the cause of the Depressed Classes then why did they not abolish untouchability and Zamindari at that time. It was ironical that Girdhari Lal himself belonged to the Depressed Classes. Despite encouraging his brethren, he discouraged them and "advised" them not to waste their energy in this, rather they should work for their uplift. It seems that the Congress was sending out its 'Harijan' leaders to suppress the demands of Dalits to get a share in political power. Dalits have understood that until they get a powerful place in the Government their economic and political problems would remain unsolved. Therefore, they were looking for a mass movement, a Satyagraha.

Dalits pointed out that the Government offices, Legislatures and local bodies over represented caste Hindus and others, but not the SCs. The SCs formed a majority only in

[63] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 15 & 71
[64] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, June 3, 1946, p. 3
[65] Ibid.

menial labour work and they specially worked for caste Hindus. Other classes paid an income tax to British Government, but the SCs paid a heavy 'income tax' in the form of interest, to Sewakars and Malguzars or Patels who were mostly from caste Hindu group. The British may be the Government for other classes of people, but caste Hindu society was the real ruler for the SCs. The SCs therefore wanted full freedom from the Hindu society. Instead of asking full freedom to the British Government, the Congress should first secure full freedom for one/fifth of the Indian population.[66]

II

The Second World War and Dalit Response:

In September 1939, the Second World War began. The Viceroy of the British India announced India as a war front. The Congress opposed this development and in October 1939, All India Congress Committee announced the resignation of all Congress Cabinets in various provinces and ordered its followers not to cooperate with the government in the War effort. At the same time, there were many instances where Dalits urged their brethren to support the British and Allies forces in the War efforts. The Congress was pressurising the Viceroy for a new declaration on the War efforts. At the same times, C.M. Thaware, the Secretary of the All India Depressed Classes' Association said, in a press statement, "this is not the time for bargaining. At this critical stage, all the differences and grievances should be kept aside."[67] He further appealed to the SCs "to help Britain, as they did in 1914, to bring the present war a great success."[68]

It was a crucial time for the Dalit movement, as cooperation would expand their bargaining power. They expressed loyalty towards the British Crown and supported the war effort. They also proposed to raise a battalion of SCs. Rai Saheb Hari Prasad Tamta appealed to his community members to "stand by the British Government and render it assistance in the successful prosecution of war. He further seeks the permission of the Viceroy to raise a

[66] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 111/41-R, Letter from G.M. Thaware, Secretariat of All India Depressed Classes Association to Mr. Gandhi regarding the Condition of Depressed Classes after Poona Pact, NAI, p. 4
[67] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Saturday, September, 16, 1939, p. 12
[68] Ibid.

battalion of the Depressed Class people at Kumaon in this connection."[69] A meeting of the Depressed Classes was held at Bagh Gosaiganj under the Presidentship of Ram Sahai, M.L.C. on September 14, 1939 "to express its profound admiration for the spirit of sacrifice displayed by the Imperial Government in going for war for upholding principles of justice and freedom. Further, they offered their humble services to His Imperial Majesty's Government at this hour of need when the very existence of democracy was in danger."[70] A similar demand was raised by the 11th conference of the All India Jatav Youth League, in Agra on December 26-28, 1941. The conference emphatically declared, "Jatavs are rightly entitled to serve in military (Air, Land and Sea) forces. The Conference, therefore, directs the brave Jatav youth to form themselves in a battalion entitled 'Jatav-Vir Battalion'. This Conference also urges to the Viceroy and Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of India to accept this demand."[71]

The Chamar Regiment was raised on June 1, 1942 in the 2nd Punjab Regiment Centre as the 27th/2nd Punjab Regiment. It was raised as an experiment with a class never previously enlisted as combatants in the Indian Army, and as its name implies, it was composed entirely of Chamars with the exception of V.C.Os and N.C.Os who were drawn from practically every Regiment of the Indian Army. The experiment proved successful and the Battalion was taken on as a regular Regiment of the Indian Army on March 1, 1943 and assumed its present title. The Regiment played an important role in various operations in Assam, Imphal, Kohima and Burma. By the end of October 1946, the Battalion returned to India for disbandment that was completed by the first week of December 1946.[72] Thus, the SCs took part in the army successfully. They wanted to show their martial capabilities which were undermined by caste Hindus.

When the Second World War was going on, Ambedkar exhorted Dalits to intensify their movement with new enthusiasm and strength. He said that, "if the British have a hundred reasons to fight the Germans, you Untouchables have a thousand and more causes to fight the Hindus. You must be prepared to state that if argument fails, force will be used to obtain your rights... The cause of conflict between Hindus and untouchables were far more

[69] Ibid.
[70] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, September, 26, 1939, p. 3
[71] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. D.21/42-R, Resolution passed at the Eleventh Annual Conference of the All-India Jatav Youth League, NAI, pp. 5-6
[72] File No. 601/9885/H – The Chamar Regiment, Ministry of Defence Archive, New Delhi

fundamental and sacred than those between the Allies and the Germans. Untouchables should fight even to the extent of shedding their blood to win their right."[73]

Quit India Movement and Dalit Reaction

The Cripps Mission came in India in 1942 to secure the cooperation of Indians in the war efforts of the British. The Mission proposed Dominion status for India, the right to frame their constitution by the people of British India and many other rights were put forward for Indians.[74] But the Congress Working Committee rejected the proposals and put up counter-proposals which demanded an immediate control of all departments including defence.[75] In the Cripps' proposals, there was no particular agenda for the SCs. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah declared in a letter to Sir Stafford Cripps that "all of us absolutely convinced that the proposals are calculated to do the greatest harm to the Depressed Classes and are sure to place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule. Any such result which takes us back to the black days of the ancient past will never be tolerated by us and we are all determined to resist any such catastrophe befalling our people, with all the means of our command.... In the end, we want to thank you for assuring us that you called us in our representative capacity...."[76]

The Cripps Mission was unable to fulfil the demands of the various political parties and sections. Gandhi characterised the proposals as wicked and termed them as "a post-dated cheque."[77] Therefore, the Congress was preparing to launch the Quit India movement. The Congress Woking Committee had passed a resolution in Wardha on July 14, 1942, which said that, "the events happening in day to day life and the experiences of the people of India are confirming the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must be ended immediately. Not merely because foreign domination, even at its best, is an evil in itself and a continuing injury to subject people but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending

[73] The Statesman (English, Delhi), October 2, 1944; Dawn (English, Delhi), October 3, 1944; The Liberator (English, Madras), October 4, 1944; Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 21/9/44-R, Question in the Legislative Assembly by N.G. Ranga regarding exhortation of violence by Harijans in the speech delivered by Ambedkar at Ellore, NAI, pp. 3-10

[74] AICC Papers, File No. G-26/1942, Part I, Stafford Cripps' Proposals and Jawaharlal Nehru's in Press Conference and his Statement in Press, NMML

[75] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms - File No. 30/10/42 – R, Extracts from Newspaper Relating to Cripps Mission, NAI, p. 56

[76] Ibid., p. 72

[77] Home – Political – File No. 19/5/44, Mr. Gandhi's Description of the Cripps Offer as a Post-Dated Cheque, NAI, p. 3

herself and in effecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity.... The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India but also for safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, militarism and any other form of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another."[78] The Congress launched the Quit India movement on August 8, 1942. On 9 August, major Congress leaders were arrested. After receiving the news of Gandhi's arrest, a political *hartal* (strike) was observed in Lucknow. C.B Gupta, President of the city Congress, Daya Kishan, Raja Ram Shastri and many other Congress leaders from Lucknow were arrested on 9 August.[79] The police and the military committed acts of terror including murder, rape, looting, burning of houses and villages, common assault and the manhandling of politicians in UP, to suppress the movement. Political prisoners were tortured and humiliated in jail. The press was also suppressed. *The National Herald* newspaper was closed down and its property was taken over. There were no means to criticise these heinous acts.[80]

When the Congress announced the plan for the movement, M.C. Rajah said in a press statement that, "I regard Mr. Gandhi's 'Quit India' slogan as the climax of the betrayal to the Depressed Classes and their political emasculation, of which Gandhi and the Congress have been guilty."[81] Dalits were worried that if the British handed over power to the Congress, then their future will be darker in the hands of Congress, because it did not want to provide liberation and freedom to Dalits. Therefore, Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj, President of the AISCF, appealed to his people not to join disturbances caused by the Congress. Rather, he asked them "they should on the other hand help the authorities in restoring and maintaining law and order."[82] Dalit leaders wanted to be sure that they have separate identity from caste Hindus. Therefore, it was their duty to keep their people aware from the 'tactics' of the Congress and Gandhi.

[78] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Wednesday, July 15, 1942, p. 1
[79] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, August 10, 1942, p. 3
[80] Home – Political – File No. 3/2/46, Enquiry by India Office about allegation of Atrocities Committed by Certain British Officials in UP during the Congress Disturbances of 1942, NAI, p. 9
[81] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, July 20, 1942, p. 4
[82] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Friday, August 14, 1942, p. 6

III

The Poona Pact and Dalit Agitation

The Poona Pact played an important role in the history and future of the Dalit movement in India. Swami Acchutanand was the first prominent Dalit leader in north India who opposed the Pact and warned Ambedkar who had accepted the Pact that he had no right to spoil the future of Dalits.[83] Later on, when the Pact played a crucial role in the victory of the Congress in 1936-37 elections, Dalits were convinced that it had nothing to do with their political development. A meeting of the Working Committee of the UP Adi Hindu Depressed Classes Association was held under the Presidentship of Lakshman Prasad Jaiswar at Cawnpore on November 1, 1939. The Working Committee announced, "They did not accept the Poona Pact and demanded its revision.[84] The Congress claimed that whatever political rights the untouchables obtained through the Pact were secured by Gandhi's efforts. Ambedkar replied that this was untrue. The Pact was the first blow aimed at the untouchables. Congress "sucked the juice out of the Pact and threw the rind in the face of the untouchables."[85]

Purusottam Dass Kureel warned SCs about the effects and real intentions of caste Hindus with regard to the Poona Pact. The Congress has obviously taken undue advantage of the system of joint electorate provided in the Pact, which was evolved in haste. "They were coerced into its acceptance irrespective of any consideration of the merits of the Pact. The Pact is nothing but a political fraud. It has robbed them of their right to send their true and genuine representatives to the legislature and has given the caste Hindu majority the virtual right to elect members of the SCs who are prepared to be the tools of that majority. The representation of any section of the people based on joint electorate with others, whose interests can never be said to be common, seems to be not only illogical but also absolutely unfair and unjustifiable. The objection of the Congress or Hindus to the system of separate electorate was not based on any principle. They wanted joint electorate because it paid them.

[83] Personal Interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 69) Allahabad on January 30, 2012 at 7:30 am
[84] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, November 2, 1939, p. 4
[85] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Thursday, July 12, 1945, p. 7

It enabled them to capture the seats reserved for the SCs and thus kept all political power in their own hands."[86]

Kureel further argued that "by insisting on the system of joint electorate the Congress has not only greatly offended the SCs, but has also created grave doubts in their minds regarding its real intentions. Is the Congress wanted to replace British imperialism by Hindu imperialism? Does the political freedom, which they are fighting for will bring equality to all sections of the Indian society or only for caste Hindus autocrats? Does it really want to have real social and political democracy or just the *Bania – Brahman* supremacy? These are the questions which are bound to occupy the mind of every SC person and the answer to these questions is the real touchstone of the sincerity of the Congress in ameliorating their condition."[87]

Resentment was growing among Dalits against the Poona Pact on the eve of Independence. In Lucknow, Rai Saheb Choudhry Ram Sahai addressed a gathering of SCs. He protested against the Pact and exhorted that "the SCs, who have been living under the serfdom of caste Hindus for the centuries, cannot attain their political rights and better their lots unless the Poona Pact is abrogated and separate electorate is granted to them." [88] A meeting of the Cawnpore SCF on February 3, 1946 was held under the Presidentship of Mahant Prem Das. An effigy of the Poona Pact and a large number of Gandhi caps were burnt by the SCF followers and they also shouted anti-Congress slogans.[89] In Lucknow also, Dalits organised a meeting of District SCF under the Presidentship of Jwala Prasad and demanded the abolition of the Pact.[90]

Fifty thousand men and 1000 delegates from Madras, Bombay, Delhi, Lahore and other several places attended a conference of the AISCF in Agra in March 1946. Ambedkar, President of the AISCF, exhorted SCs "to stand for the freedom of India and not for the Congress-high class Hindu rule... The Congress is our greatest enemy. They treat us worse than dogs."[91] This conference favoured separate electorates and appealed to the British

[86] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.18
[87] Ibid.
[88] Dawn (English, Delhi), Sunday, February 3, 1946, p. 8
[89] Dawn (English, Delhi), Tuesday, February 5, 1946, p. 5
[90] Dawn (English, Delhi), Tuesday, March 12, 1946, p. 8
[91] Dawn (English, Delhi), Wednesday, March 13, 1946, p. 6

Government to form the Constituent Assembly based on adult franchise and separate electorate. The conference strongly condemned the Poona Pact because it was unable to send their genuine representatives. It was just a tool for Congress to send their puppets to the Legislature.[92]

The demands in favour of repealing the Poona Pact came from many parts of UP. Shilpkars from Nainital District (February 26, 1946) and the SCs from Lakhunpore condemned the Pact and demanded its early revocation.[93] The same demand was raised by Choudhri Buddu Das Kureel at Kakori in Lucknow on March 19, 1946 in a meeting of the SCs.[94] It was not limited to UP only, but there were several conferences and meetings of Dalits where they demanded the abolition of the Pact. In Madras, G.A. Gavai, General Secretary of the All India Depressed Classes Association, demanded an early abrogation of the Pact.[95] In Bombay, Ambedkar demanded it. He asked, "why should we not agitate against it. No treaty in the world is accepted as sacrosanct. The Pact has resulted in the political disenfranchisement of the very people in whose interests it was made. What we are asking for is that the deliberate opinion of one community should not be nullified by that of another."[96] 15000 SC men and women staged a demonstration in the Central Provinces against the Pact.[97] In 1946, there were 21 telegrams were sent to the Viceroy from various untouchable unions in Gaziabad, Jullunder, Garhshankar, Nakodar, Bathkalan, Jayon, etc. These telegrams expressed: no faith in the Congress; Jagjivan Ram as a traitor; invitation should be send to Ambedkar for Interim Government; demand for separate electorate and abolition of the Poona Pact.[98]

Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi' from Allahabad termed the Poona Pact as weapon of the Congress against Dalits. The Pact was dangerous in its nature and it was responsible for the disunity among untouchables.[99] On the other hand, Shastri presented a different Dalit perspective on the Pact. First, he noticed that "now caste Hindus would not blame us that we

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Dawn (English, Delhi), Saturday, March 16, 1946, p. 6
[94] Dawn (English, Delhi), Sunday, March 24, 1946, p. 6
[95] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Saturday, June 8, 1946, p. 11
[96] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, July 22, 1946, p. 4
[97] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Friday, August 16, 1946, p. 1
[98] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms Diary – File No. 4173/46-R, Condemning the Poona Pact and Demand of Separate Electorate for the SCs, NAI
[99] Dr. Nandlal Jaiswar 'Viyogi'; Ambedkar ke Jivan ki Ek Jhanki (A Glimpse into Ambedkar's Life), Allahabad, 1947, p. 12

did not provide them with a chance for repentance."[100] This clearly means that caste Hindus were sinners. Further, he said that "the Poona Pact remained an eye-opener for Dalits. Now Dalits have become aware that Gandhi was playing with the interests of Dalits. Secondly, because of the Pact, our movement became strong. On the basis of two general elections, Dalits now have become strong to demand a separate political identity. Thus, we did not lose in the elections by the Pact rather we won heavily."[101]

IV

Separate Identity and Scheduled Castes' Satyagraha

The SCs were recognised as a separate entity as early as 1917 by the Montague-Chelmsford Report. The Joint Parliamentary Committee also recognised them as a distinct element. At the Round Table Conference, the Government of India again recognised them as separate political group.[102] Ambedkar said at the Round Table Conference that he proposed a "separate and distinct entity for the Depressed Classes, so as to entitle them to separate political recognition. But Gandhi proposed to keep them under the section of Hindus, not entitled to any separate political representation. The Communal Award recognised their separate political entity and that position were further strengthened by the Viceroy's August Offer in 1940."[103] In the Offer, it was clearly mentioned that no constitution for India would be acceptable to the British government without the consent of the Depressed Classes.

In 1942, Ambedkar said in a meeting of the Depressed Classes Welfare Association of Delhi that "since 1940, the position of the Depressed Classes has suffered a setback. The Cripps proposals envisaged a settlement with Congress and the Muslim League. This was great betrayal of our community. Congress has been dying to reach a settlement with League and Gandhi shortly before his arrest declared that he did not recognise the separate identity of the Depressed Classes."[104] The same Gandhi, who once conceded the Depressed Classes were

[100] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 89 (translation mine from Hindi)
[101] Ibid. (translation mine from Hindi)
[102] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.18
[103] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, July 20, 1942, p. 4
[104] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, August 24, 1942, p. 3

a separate group from caste Hindus under the Poona Pact, now said that he has no obligation to be bound by the Pact.

In the course of recognising SCs as a separate identity Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India, has also clearly stated in his letter to Gandhi dated August 15, 1944 that "the SCs are one of the most important and separate elements in the national life of India and that their consent is a necessary condition to transfer the power to Indians."[105] N. Shivraj presided over the third annual session of the AISCF in Bombay in 1945. He asserted that the SCs formed an important and separate element in the national life of India and their consent to any constitution of India was a necessary condition for the transfer of power to Indians.... We shall resist the attempt of passing the power, if it counts Hindus and Muslims as the only elements in the national life of India. We shall not allow ourselves to be thus led down between the Hindus coward and the Muslim bully."[106] Now Dalits became more aware about the 'politics' going on between the Congress and the Muslim League. Therefore, they did not want to be blind spectators only. Their leaders wanted to create political awareness among their ignorant masses.

Purusottam Dass Kureel most emphatically and categorically asserted that the "SCs are a distinct and separate element and that they are a religious minority, in a sense far more real than the Sikhs and the Muslims can be. They will not tolerate any kind of settlement of the Indian political parties which was done without their willing consent and which does not recognise them as a separate element apart from the Hindus. No Constitution will be acceptable to them unless it is on the basis of equitable distribution of legislative and administrative powers and concedes to them the right of self-determination and self-assertion."[107]

The AISCF launched a countrywide movement in 1946 for the abolition of the Pact and during the Satyagraha, they were asked to renounce their title which were given to them by the Government. First of all N. Sivaraj, President of the AISCF renounced his title

[105] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.18
[106] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, May 9, 1945, p. 5
[107] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p.18

"Dewan Bahadur" as a protest against the attitude of the British Government towards the SCs.[108]

Scheduled Castes' Satyagraha (1946)

The British Government sent the Cabinet Mission in 1946 for the formation of the interim government and constituent assembly in India. The Mission did not recognise SCs as separate element in the national life of India and it did not provide them with their just representation. In a 2000 words resolution, the Working Committee of the AISCF in a meeting at Bombay called upon His Majesty's Government and the Labour Party in England to take up the cause of the SCs seriously and to rectify immediately the wrong done to them by the Cabinet Mission. Failing this, the Working Committee "feels that there will be no alternative for the SCs but to resort to direct action."[109] The resolution further declared, "If circumstances require such direct action to save the SCs from the impending catastrophe, the Working Committee will not hesitate to ask the SCs to take it."[110]

The working Committee of the Lucknow District SCF under the Presidentship of Mewalal Sonkar condemned the Cabinet Mission's proposal. He declared it as "complete betrayal to the 60 million SCs of this country and urged His Majesty's Government to undo the great wrong done to them by the Cabinet Mission."[111] The Mission gave only one seat to the SCs in the formation of the interim government. Thus, they were considering six crore untouchables as equal to 40 lakhs of Sikhs and 30 lakhs of Anglo-Indians. This was a grave injustice to Dalits.[112] Finally, the SC seat was given to Jagjivan Ram who was affiliated to the Congress. Ambedkar strongly rejected Jagjivan Ram's candidature because he was not a true representative of the SCs. Therefore, Ambedkar asked for two seats for AISCF, the real representative body of the SCs.[113]

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[108] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Sunday, August 25, 1946, p. 4 & Tuesday, August 27, 1946, p. 1
[109] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Thursday, June 6, 1946, p. 1; Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, July 11, 1946, p. 4 & Ram Chander Banoudha; Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh (Life Struggle of Ambedkar), Allahabad 1st edition, 1947(3rd edition by Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh, 2005), p. 131
[110] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Thursday, June 6, 1946, p. 1
[111] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Wednesday, June 12, 1946, p. 3
[112] Ram Chander Banoudha; Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh (Life Struggle of Ambedkar), Allahabad 1st edition, 1947(3rd edition by Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh, 2005), p. 128
[113] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Tuesday, June 18, 1946, p. 1 & Ram Chander Banoudha; Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh (Life Struggle of Ambedkar), Allahabad 1st edition, 1947(3rd edition by Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh, 2005), p. 129

The SCs' non-violent Satyagraha was started in Poona on July 15, 1946 by the followers of the Bombay Province Scheduled Castes' Federation (BPSCF) to protest against the injustice done to them by the Cabinet Mission proposals, which, for them, was the result of the Congress machination. The first batch of the six Satyagrahis – four women and two men – was arrested opposite the Council Hall for violating the Poona District Magistrate's order, prohibiting any demonstration in front of the Council Hall. Those arrested included Ahantabai Dahi, a member of the Working Committee of the AISCF from Nasik and Gitabai Gaikwad, wife of B.K. Gaikwad, President of the BPSCF. They shouted slogans of "Down with British Imperialism", "Down with Congress", and "Scrap the Poona Pact".[114] P.N. Rajbhoj addressed the meeting of the SCs on the same day and said, "A beginning of their 'freedom Struggle' had been made today. The SCs were fully awakened and they would not rest until they achieve their aim. Today's satyagraha was the beginning of a country-wide movement."[115]

In UP, the SC agitation remained at the forefront in the political activities. According to the UP Fortnightly Reports, the latest belligerents in the provincial political fields were the SCs. Since July 15, 1946, they had been demonstrating against the Cabinet Mission, the Congress and the Poona Pact. [116] On the same day, Piarelal Kureel Talib and four other SC leaders were arrested after they addressed a mass meeting in Aminuddaula Park at Lucknow. In this meeting, they loudly acclaimed the decision of the AISCF to launch mass Civil Disobedience. The movement gained strength on July 16 when including Bisheshwar Nath and Triloki Nath, 223 members of the UPSCF were arrested for defying the ban on processions in the city as a protest against the Cabinet Mission proposals. They shouted slogans like "Down with the Cabinet Mission's Proposals", "Down with Congress"... "Repeal the Poona Pact".[117]

It was for the first time in the history of Dalit movement that their women took part actively in a caste struggle and were arrested. It was a unique development. The level of education among SC girls was very low. Only one girl out of every 30,000 from the

[114] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, July 16, 1946, p. 13; The Hindustan Times (English, Delhi), Tuesday, July 16, 1946, p. 3, Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, July 18, 1946, p. 2
[115] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, July 16, 1946, p. 13
[116] Home – Political, File No. 18/7/46, Provincial Fortnightly Report for the Month of July, 1946, NAI, pp. 21-22
[117] The Hindustan Times (English, Delhi), Tuesday, July 16, 1946, p. 3; The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Wednesday, July 17, 1946, p. 1; Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, July 18, 1946, p. 1

Depressed Classes advanced beyond the primary stage.[118] However, at this stage, illiteracy did not matter. They were *pade-likhe* (reading and writing) by experience. They had very closely experience the discrimination and ill-treatment of caste Hindus. In many regions, for example, in Gwalior, they experienced the inhuman tradition of molestation of new brides of untouchables by caste Hindus or landlords.[119] Therefore, they considered it a 'golden chance' to eliminate their subjugation. Interestingly, SC women participated in the Satyagraha along with their babies. This shows that they were fighting on both fronts; on the one hand, they were taking care of their family and on the other hand, they along with their men, were taking part in the movement to fight against the injustice, which was done to them. The wife of Piarelal Kureel Talib along with 29 members of UPSCF was arrested on July 18. The Satyagraha remained peaceful almost everywhere. For example, the situation in Allahabad remained peaceful. There was only a slowdown in business and very few shops were opened.[120]

Ambedkar warned the British Government that, "this is only the beginning of our struggle. When the struggle is forced to take the form of the Congress movement, we will do everything as Congress did in the August disturbances [1942]."[121] The Satyagraha continuously expanded among SCs and the small batches of the Satyagrahis were constantly organising demonstrations in Lucknow.[122] The wife of Piarelal Kureel Talib warned the Congress that "it is regrettable that the Congress Ministry refuses to read the signs of time. By remaining silent over the SC movement it is sowing the seeds of further tension."[123]

In Cawnpore, Dalits participated in the Satyagraha. They shouted slogans like "*Congress Ministry Ka Nash Ho*" (Down with Congress Ministry), "*British Sarkar Ka Nash Ho*" (Down with British Government), "*Acchut Muslims Ek Ho*", (Untouchable-Muslims unity), and "Jai Bhim". Fulli Das, Municipal Commissioner with 20 volunteers, Bhagwan

[118] Sir Philip Hartog; (Chairman) A Report on Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1930, p. 220
[119] Rajpal Singh; Swami Acchutanand Harihar, Delhi: Rajlakshmi Prakashan, 2002, p. 50
[120] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Friday, July 19, 1946, p. 1
[121] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Friday, July 19, 1946, p. 1; The Hindustan Times (English, Delhi), Saturday, July 20, 1946, p. 5; Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Monday, July 22, 1946, p. 2
[122] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Friday, July 19, 1946, p. 1; Thursday, July 25, 1946, p. 11; Friday, August 16, 1946, p 3
[123] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, July 30, 1946, p. 3

Das with 25 volunteers, Badlu Ram with 25 volunteers and Tilak Chand Kureel along with 5 volunteers were arrested when they offered Satyagraha in Cawnpore.[124]

At the same time, the Satyagraha spread in various parts of India. Ten thousand SCs including 500 women, held demonstrations outside the Provincial Assembly in the Central Provinces. Members of the SCs observed complete *hartal* in Yeotmal on July 17 in sympathy with Poona Satyagraha and to protest against the Cabinet Mission's proposals.[125] The Madras Province SCF also declared to initiate Satyagraha on the lines of Poona Satyagraha.[126]

Piarelal Kureel was released from Lucknow Central Jail on September 4, 1946. He said that "the reports appearing in the nationalist papers that some of the SC Satyagrahis had tendered apology and that their movement had fizzled out is a barefaced lie."[127] After a gap of fifteen days, the Satyagraha was resumed in Lucknow and 40 members of UPSCF offered Satyagraha in front of Council Hall.[128] In the last phase of the Satyagraha, in UP, Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant' was the organiser of the protest demonstrations in Lucknow. Then Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier of UP, imposed Section 144 to stop protest demonstrations by the Depressed Classes. Because of Dr. Gaya Prasad Prashant's efficient leadership, more than ten thousand people came to Lucknow to hear him and he made all arrangements for the success of the Satyagraha.[129] Dr. Chhedi Lal Sathi, Congress Harijan leader from Lucknow also supported the Satyagraha. He argued, "it was a popular Satyagraha comparable to the Quit India movement. Some two lakh Dalit Satyagrahis participated in the movement."[130] Ramnarayan Rawat argues that this may be exaggeration, but it makes a point about the popular strength of the movement.

To ensure the participation in the Satyagraha, leaders of the UPSCF toured their respective areas to mobilise Dalits. Dalit leaders like Manikchand and Faqir Chand toured

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[124] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, August 1, 1946, p. 6; Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 70
[125] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Saturday, July 20, 1946, p. 4
[126] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Wednesday, July 31, 1946, p. 2
[127] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Friday, September 6, 1946, p. 3
[128] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Sunday, August 18, 1946, p. 2
[129] Telephonic interview with Guru Prasad Madan, friend of Dr. G.P. Prashant (age 66) Allahabad on 28 April, 2008, 8.15 am. & Dr. Angane Lal and Dr. Rahul Raj; Uttar Pradesh me Dalit Andolan (Dalit Movement in Uttar Pradesh), Delhi: Gautam Book Center, 2011, p. 49
[130] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; "Making Claims for Power: A New Agenda in Dalit Politics in Uttar Pradesh, 1946-48", Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 2003), p. 608

western areas of UP and an intensive campaign was launched by them in Agra and Firozabad. Swami Chamanand also held similar kinds of meeting in Etah and Etawah districts. Tilak Chand Kureel organised Dalits in Cawnpore and Lucknow and also toured Azamgarh and Gorakhpur.[131] Gaya Prasad 'Prashant' also toured Cawnpore, Lucknow and Unnao and asked Dalits to agitate for their rights.[132] The Satyagraha was carried out into small batches, because Dalits had economic limitations and they could not feed large gatherings. Therefore, Satyagrahis were asked to bring their ration with them and a "*Mushti* Fund" was collected for Satyagrahis in which everyone was asked to contribute a handful of rice.[133]

During the Satyagraha, some Dalit organisations tried to show their loyalty towards Congress. Gajadhar Prasad, M.L.A. and member of the UPDCL accused SCF followers for launching a Satyagraha for their narrow vested interests. They were accused of being under the influence of the Muslim League and the Zamindar Association and taking money for participating in the Satyagraha.[134] Bhagat Ameen Chand, General Secretary of the All India Harijan League in Punjab threatened Ambedkar and the AISCF. He declared himself and his community as "nationalist Harijans" and warned that they could no longer tolerate with equanimity such action.[135] Congress leaders like B.G. Kher in Bombay said that the Satyagraha was motivated by a sense of frustration on the part of the Federation because they had lost the last elections.[136] A Hindi daily, *Vartman* from Cawnpore, commented on its editorial page: "the only reason for the movement is Ambedkar's ambitions and frustration. This situation arose because the British Government now thought that Ambedkar is not the real leader of the untouchables. It has recognised the Congress Harijan leaders as true leaders of the untouchables. Ambedkar wanted to remain in newspapers; therefore, he started this movement. The time of Ambedkar has ended. Now Ambedkar should not ignore the 'truth' and not malign his name in the history of India. By following the footprints of Jinnah, he cannot do any bad thing to caste Hindus rather he would do injustice towards the untouchables."[137] Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel in a letter to Bhagat Ameen Chand, Lahore,

[131] Ibid., p. 603
[132] Telephonic interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 66), friend of Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant', Allahabad on 28 April, 2008, 8.15 am.
[133] The Hindustan Times (English, Delhi), Wednesday, July 17, 1946, p. 3; Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, July 18, 1946, p. 2
[134] AICC Papers, File No. G-19 (KWI)/1946-48, NMML
[135] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Saturday, July 20, 1946, p. 4
[136] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Monday, July 22, 1946, p. 4
[137] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Monday, July 22, 1946, p 2 (translation mine from Hindi)

argued that "the SC Satyagraha have no importance. There was no need for counter-Satyagraha. This Satyagraha will end very soon."[138]

It seems that a notion prevailed that anything against the will of Gandhi and the Congress was a crime against the 'nation'. Dalits had been provided with so-called rights from caste Hindus in the Poona Pact. It is noteworthy to point out that Dalits felt these were not rights but a conspiracy against them. It was an act of breach of faith. Now in 1946, Dalits demanded their representation from the British Government but caste Hindus did not consider them as rightful, because for them, it was the time when their 'nation' was going to be independent. Ambedkar and his followers were creating problems for the Congress movement. Then question arises why Ambedkar called for the Satyagraha? Were Gandhi and the Congress not trustworthy for Dalits? Were Gandhi and the Congress not safeguarding interests of Dalits? *Vartman* and the Congress leaders presented a viewpoint where boundary lines were important, not the people who were living under these severe conditions of so-called slavery. They were talking about the independence of India but they did not present any concrete programme on freedom of Dalits from the Brahmanical rule. Right from the beginning, Ambedkar and his followers asserted openly that Gandhi and the Congress were the voice of caste Hindus only. They were working for bringing the '*Ram Rajya*' where Shudras like Shambook was murdered for the sake of restoration of religious purity. Gandhi and the Congress were the saviour of the interest of caste Hindus only. Therefore, Ambedkar and his followers were compelled to launch a Satyagraha to safeguard their interests. *Vartman*, *The Hindustan Times* and Congressmen criticised Ambedkar for this Satyagraha and for creating obstacles in the way of obtaining freedom. They also alleged that at last Ambedkar had chosen the way which Mahatma Gandhi used against Britishers: the Satyagraha.[139] But it was not the first time when Ambedkar had chosen Satyagraha. Earlier in the case of Mahad tank and temple entry movement in Bombay, Ambedkar had done so. The noteworthy point was that his Satyagraha was different from that of the Congress and Gandhi. Despite the claim of non-violence by Gandhi, his Satyagrahas, whether it was the Non-Cooperation or the August Disturbances of 1942, were not free from violence. In contrast, Ambedkar's Satyagraha remained peaceful despite being instigated by caste Hindus in 1928 or later.

[138] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Saturday, August 24, 1946, p. 4 (translation mine from Hindi)
[139] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Monday, July 22, 1946, p 2; The Hindustan Times (English, Delhi), Wednesday, July 24, 1946, p. 5

During partition, Dalits from various provinces were anxious about their future. They were demanding fair representation in administration and services. The All India Depressed Classes League, Delhi, demanded adequate representation while nominating Indian Governors, formation of the Boundary Commission for Punjab and Bengal, and creation of Ministries and other services. The UP Chamar Mahasabha, Cawnpore, and the UPSCF demanded for just representation in various departments of Central and Provincial Governments. The All India Depressed Classes Ad-Dharmi Mandal, Lyallpur in Punjab Province, requested for the safeguarding of the interests of the SCs of Punjab. The Sind Provincial Nationalist Harijans Party, Karachi demanded the adequate representation in the Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies and other government services.[140]

In his booklet, Shastri tells to the Congress that, "this is no Ram Rajya where caste Hindus are blessed by Brahman-Gods for killing of Shudras who were performing *tapasya* (meditation). It is no longer the time of Sri Krishna when the thumb was cut off in the name of *Guru-Dakshina*. It is no longer the period of Peshwas when Dalits were forced to walk with a pot round their neck. It is no longer the time of Sankracharya, where if a Shudra listens and recites the scriptures and tries to become a *Pandit*, it was enough to cut off his tongue and to hang him. Now it is the time of *Janta* (public). If the Dalit was alive after cutting off their ears, noses and throats, then remember he would be alive tomorrow also... Now disciples of Gandhi can no more threaten them with their empty warnings."[141]

V

Tension between Caste Hindus and Dalits

During 1946-47, there were instances of clashes between Dalits and caste Hindus in rural areas in UP. The Commissioners of Meerut and Bareilly both reported an increase in friction. In Saharanpur, Chamars refused to work in the fields unless they were paid from Rs. 45/- to Rs. 60/- a month, while Rajputs, Gujars and Jats retaliated by refusing to permit Chamars to

[140] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, pp. 5-27

[141] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 72 (translation mine from Hindi)

graze their cattle, cut wood etc. In Pilibhit Chamars resolved not to carry bodies from police stations for post-mortem examination. Retaliation by caste Hindus was violent and deadly. One Chamar was killed and seventy were injured when a large number of Gujars and others attacked and looted their colony in a village in Muzaffarnagar district, while in the Budaun district two persons were killed in a clash between Chamars and Thakurs.[142] Rawat pointed out that Dalits were now seeking to redefine their position by making their occupations respectable and gaining independence from the domination, exercised by caste Hindus.[143] However, other reasons for these clashes were also present. Dalits were becoming politically aware at that time. India was going to be free from the British rule, therefore, they had to stand on their own.

The Pioneer reported that the economic life in the countryside in Gorakhpur district was threatened with serious disruption following some new demands of Chamars against their age-old conditions of services. Moreover, an inter-caste clash was apprehended due to the 'mischievous' propaganda of Ambedkarites who were gradually spreading in many villages.[144] The difficulties of caste Hindus increased with demands of Chamars in Rampurawa village in Hata tehsil. They refused tilling the fields until they got for themselves 3 *bighas* of land for cultivation plus Rs. 6 as monthly pay. Their women, who worked as midwives, also demanded Rs. 15 per case. [145] Similar reports about demands of 'abnormal' wages for ploughing fields were received from other parts of the district as well. In Sadar tehsil, the Chamars had recently gone on a strike for several days which, however, fizzled out. The Kahars[146] had stopped working so long as their demands for higher wages were not accepted. It was alleged that the Muslim League was supporting the Ambedkarites to incite the low castes. [147] *Vartman*, a daily from Cawnpore, reported that "the Ambedkarites were inciting Raidas brothers against caste Hindus. They were telling them not to work for them and to abuse them and the Congress. They have created a tense environment between untouchables and caste Hindus."[148] There was a news item from Cawnpore that there was a clash between SCF workers and non-Dalit Congress sympathisers in Nimbu village. Many

[142] Home – Political, File No. 18/7/46, Provincial Fortnightly Report for the Month of July, 1946, NAI, p. 23
[143] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; "Making Claims for Power: A New Agenda in Dalit Politics in Uttar Pradesh, 1946-48", Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 2003), p. 609
[144] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, June 11, 1946, p. 8
[145] Ibid.
[146] Their traditional work was to carry out the *Doli/Palki* of a newly wedded bride. They belonged to low castes.
[147] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, June 11, 1946, p. 8
[148] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Saturday, August 17, 1946, p. 4 (translation is mine from Hindi)

people were injured in the clash. SCF workers went there to participate in a meeting of untouchables. Their loudspeakers were also broken by caste Hindus. They have no trash.[149] The President of the UPSCF in a letter to Sir Francis Wylie, Governor, UP demanded an immediate and independent inquiry into the conduct of Congress sympathisers. A copy of the letter had also been forwarded to Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ambedkar and G.B. Pant.[150]

Another cause of tension among Dalits and caste Hindus was the use of the *Dola Palki* (palanquins). The *Palkis* were prepared by the low castes but according to the Hindu religious and social traditions, they were not allowed to use *Dola Palki* for wedding in Garhwal region.[151] There were many incidents of clashes between Dalits and Caste Hindus. In Garhwal, disputes took place between caste Hindus and the low castes over the right of use of the *Palki* for bridegroom. It caused of a minor riot.[152] On March 25, 1945 caste Hindus attacked on a marriage party of Shilpkars in Nand Prayag. They snatched the *Palki*.[153] Girdhari Lal, a Congress Harijan leader, expressed his concern over the issue. He said, "I have learnt about the recurrence of the *Dola Palki* trouble in Garhwal with a sense of sorrow and revolt. Being one of the oppressed people of the Hindu community, I have watched from far the unjust, irreligious and irresponsible action of Garhwal *Dwijas* maltreating my brethren in Garhwal and wounding their innocent bride by refusing them the basic civil liberties. I have felt sorry for them. I have always had a hope that Garhwal which always fought for national independence would one day or other awake to the need of the changed times and treat the Harijans on the basis of equality."[154] He appealed to the "*Dwijas* of Garhwal to see the light of the day search their heart and be rational in their attitude towards their unfortunate brethren. I appeal to the Harijans of the district to be patient and try to win their liberty through service, sacrifice and co-operation."[155] This appeal shows that the Gandhian Harijans truly believed in the "change of heart" of caste Hindus. Dalits were being oppressed by *Dwijas* for centuries but still Girdhari Lal had a hope for the change. It was a time for action,

[149] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Sunday, September 29, 1946, p. 1
[150] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, October 8, 1946, p. 12
[151] Ajay S. Rawat; Garhwal Himalaya: A Study in Historical Perspective, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 2002, p. 270
[152] Home – Political, File No. 18/17/41-Poll (I), Report of an exodus of about 4000 people from Cawnpore in consequence of distribution of leaflet by the District Magistrate, Cawnpore calling for volunteers for A.R.P., NAI, pp. 2-3
[153] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Tuesday, March 27, 1945, p. 2
[154] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Thursday, June 27, 1946, p. 8
[155] Ibid.

not for appeals. At the same time, we find instances of the strikes by Chamars, sweepers, Kahars etc. in various parts of UP.

The continued clashes between Shilpkars and caste Hindus over *Dola Palki* make it clear that there was no impact of these appeals on caste Hindus. Baldev Singh Arya, a Congress Harijan leader and convener of the *Dola Palki Raksha Samiti*, at Garhwal said in a press statement that, "for a pretty long time the *Dola Palki* dispute has been going on in Garhwal and so far there has been no perceptible change in the mentality of caste Hindu community as a whole, towards the imperative need of putting an end to these manifestations of tyranny.... [their] hearts cannot be melted easily. The weapon of legislation alone can instil fear in them and force them to treat their suppressed and more unfortunate brothers on a basis of equality."[156] But their hope was lost when UP Premier G.B. Pant, a noted Congress leader, declared that Shilpkars had the lawful claim to use *Dola* and *Palki* during their marriages. Therefore, there was no need to enact a law in this respect. Thus, it was clear that there is great difference between 'claim' and 'right'. Shilpkars wanted to solve this problem on a permanent basis through getting the 'lawful right', which could only be granted through a law. But G.B. Pant, who was the resident of same locality and knew the reasons of tension better, did not take the trouble to abolish the differences between caste Hindus and Shilpkars. It seems that the Congress and caste Hindus did not want to end the oppression of the low castes.

Sweepers' Unrest

By the 1930s, some untouchable occupation groups, such as municipal sweepers, had begun to organise themselves, to demand better wages and working conditions, as well as civic facilities in their residential neighbourhoods and schools for their children. Vijay Prasad argues that the authorities did not take them seriously. Even they did not care to make a note of their demands.[157] Sweepers focused on securing largely 'economic' demands of better wage or working conditions from the employers. Manifestly, neither this 'class' approach accommodated a broader range of political aspirations of the untouchables for rights, nor did it incorporate their social identity as an excluded section. Nandini Gooptu argues that

[156] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Thursday, December 19, 1946, p. 12
[157] Vijay Prasad; Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 130

Congress Socialists tended to subsume caste under class-based politics. However, political action on the part of the untouchable workers, even in the form of a trade union movement, was related to their growing political awareness, which had developed through the *Bhakti* and Adi Hindu movements. At times, the connections with Adi Hinduism were clearly stated in trade union action. In a charter of demands submitted to the Commissioner of Allahabad in 1939 by the association of municipal sweepers in the town, it was argued that as an 'untouchable Adi Hindu community' their own representatives should be given places in the committee set up by the provincial government to propose improvements in the working and living conditions of municipal employees. Thus, the Adi Hindu and Bhakti religious and social reform movements also informed work-based political action. The latter remained a prominent form of self-assertion for the untouchable poor. The experiences of the untouchables at their workplace and in wider social contests were interconnected and the struggle against social exclusion was as significant as securing higher wages or better working conditions. The Congress Socialists were unable, however, to address these dual dimensions of untouchable politics, and their initiative was no more successful than the Congress one in this particular respect. [158]

Campaigns against God and religion were becoming a part of the socialistic propaganda in a section of the extremist press. Some newspapers were urging to 'Harijans' not to happy with the temple-entry movement but to strengthen their organisation in order to emancipate themselves from caste Hindus. The *Mazdoor* sought to refute the contention of the *Dalitodaya* that the 'suited and booted' labour leaders are not as sincere as the Khaddar clad Congressites and that the commencement of class war will be disastrous for the workers. It said: "if you are so afraid of the capitalistic Government and society kindly do not poke your nose into the affairs of Harijans. The Harijans have been pulverised by the capitalistic society for thousands of years but now their eyes are being opened and the day when they shake off their slumber and see that the hell in which they live, owes its existence to the heaven of the rich, they will lay aside the hollow philosophy of change of hearts and gird up their loins on the basis of class war for securing their just rights from selfish capitalists and caste Hindus. This struggle could never be prevented. Hence if the Harijans want to live like human beings by emancipating themselves from the slavery of capitalists and caste Hindus they should not let themselves be lured into the snare of change of hearts or temple entry but

[158] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 178-79

strengthen their organisation. This is the only way in which they can emancipate themselves."[159]

Another cause of tension between Dalits and caste Hindus was the growing number of strikes by municipal sweepers in the various cities of UP. Communists led them. They continued their efforts to influence labourers at Cawnpore, Agra and Modinagar in the Meerut district.[160] However, their struggle was limited to economic demands only. These included increased wages, dearness allowance, and stoppage of bribe, etc. There was an exception when the Bundelkhand Sweepers' Conference in 1946 demanded independence from the British government. The demands of sweepers played an important part in shaping the Dalit movement in 1930s and 1940s.

Sweepers were organising themselves for spearheading the movement for their rights and a better life. In Cawnpore, they went on strike in 1937 to increase the wages, dearness allowance and immediate prevention of bribe.[161] When their leader Lallu Ram was arrested from Aligarh, about 3000 sweepers started demonstrating in Cawnpore. They passed a resolution to fight his case in the Court, and to solve this purpose they asked their people to collect fund.[162] The situation in Unnao was also becoming tense with the decision of the sweepers to go on strike because they had very low pay and they were victims of the ill-treatment.[163] Unrest continued among municipal sweepers in Bundelkhand and Meerut.[164] One Commissioner remarked, "labour is in an extreme state of ferment and the situation is being cynically exploited by Communists for political ends without having the least regard to the merits of the dispute or the general wellbeing of labour."[165] Sweepers in several districts were showing considerable signs of dissatisfaction.[166] Cawnpore was the main centre of unrest and the fortnight of the August 1946 saw strikes regarding several concerns there. The sweepers of the Lucknow Municipal Board served strike notices.[167] The sweepers of the Benares Municipal Board went on strike on June 12, 1947 on the issues of increased wages,

[159] Home – Political, File No. 7/22/34-Poll, Questions of taking Action against certain pro-Communist articles appearing in the Press in the UP which aim at inciting the Harijans against the High Class Hindus, NAI, pp. 2-3
[160] Home – Political, File No. 18/7/46, Provincial Fortnightly Report for the Month of July, 1946, NAI, p. 22
[161] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Sunday, September 26, 1937, p. 5
[162] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Thursday, September 30, 1937, p. 6
[163] Vartman (Hindi, Cawnpore) Sunday, October 3, 1937, p. 3
[164] Home – Political, File No. 18/7/46, Provincial Fortnightly Report for the Month of July, 1946, NAI, p. 24
[165] Home – Political, File No. 18/8/46, Provincial Fortnightly Report for the Month of August, 1946, NAI, p. 20
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., p. 82

the grant of uniform and a half day off on Sundays and medical leave. Unrest among municipal employees, particularly sweepers, was brewing in many municipalities.[168] About four thousands sweepers of Jhansi went on strike form December 22, 1945. The District Magistrate had promulgated Section 144 in the city and banned all demonstrations by sweepers for a fortnight. Two communist workers, alleged to be the leaders of the strike, were arrested.[169] In a meeting at Muzaffarnagar, the UPDCL requested to the UP government that sweepers should be granted their dearness allowance from July 1946 onwards because they were very poorly paid.[170]

Apart from UP, the sweepers of Bombay, Srinagar, Multan, Delhi, Lahore and a host of other towns put down their dustpans and brooms in anticipation of a better world in 1946. Prasad argues, "the sweepers' militancy disturbed Gandhi. He noted that there were certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. Sweepers' grievances came in this category... He was [also] opposed to the 'coercive methods' (that is, strikes) employed by the Sweepers, since coercion can but result in the end in chaos."[171] It is interesting that Gandhi was disallowing to adopt 'coercive methods', however he himself used these freely; for instance in the case of the Communal Award. The Award meant for a better life for untouchables. Sweepers through their strikes also wanted a better life. Gandhi vehemently opposed both the events.

The Bundelkhand Sweepers' Conference met in May 1946 under the Presidentship of Ram Prasad of Tundla and passed a resolution demanding an unequivocal declaration of Indian independence by the British and withdrawal of British troops from India during the interim period. In another resolution, the Conference urged all Provincial Governments to enact laws ensuring sweepers' entry in public places- schools, wells, etc. It also demanded that the pay of sweepers should be raised to Rs. 40 per month with additional Rs. 30 per month as dearness allowance.[172] This was for the first time in UP when sweepers raised the issue of independence along with their economic demands. Now, the question of independence became important for them. One thing, which is important to note is that, it

[168] Ministry of Home Affairs – Political Section, File No. 18/6/47-Poll (I), Reports and Returns Fortnightly from Provinces for the Month of June, 1947, NAI, pp. 24-25 & 99
[169] Dawn (English, Delhi), Sunday, December 23, 1945, p. 8
[170] AICC Papers, File No. G-19 (KWI)/1946-48, NMML
[171] Vijay Prasad; Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 132
[172] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Saturday, June 1, 1946, p. 6

seems that the Congress influenced them, as they were demanding independence from British Government only; there was no mention of independence from caste Hindus. They did not understand the mechanism of the caste system. More or less all Congress Harijans believed in the Varna system because Gandhi did so. Here, sweepers only saw their immediate problems and therefore identified the British as their enemy.

Gandhi argued that to make Dalits happy, the non-Dalits must 'stretch out the hand of fellowship to the Bhangis' (sweepers). Gandhi and the Congress did not amplify the political demands of the Mehtars. Instead, they approached the Mehtars' demands through the perspective of 'charity' and further they also 'institutionalised' it.[173] There perspective was to 'uplift' the 'unfortunate ones', rather than approaching their demands in the language and paradigm of *Rights.* They opted for 'peace-meal' methods and not for a revolutionary change for all Depressed Classes.

However, sweepers' movement was not as aggressive as other SCs' movement. They had their local demands and when these were fulfilled, they called off their movement. They did not have any connection with sweepers of other cities. But the important thing to note was that, for the first time in their movement, they became united, even if it was on a small scale. It was an initiation of their long struggle after independence.

Question of Temple Entry and Dalits

The Congress had come to power in seven provinces in 1937 and therefore the time had come to show how far it was sympathetic to the cause of the SCs. Interestingly they chose the way to their emancipation through opening up of temples for them. In the Congress ruled Provinces like Madras, Bombay, the Central Provinces and Berar, temple-entry bills were introduced to the Legislative Assemblies in 1938-39.[174] These bills did not provide direct entry into temples for the SCs. They had to follow a process. First, 50 SC residents had to give in an application to the trustee of the temple. Second, there would be voting on the question, if SCs should be allowed or not, from caste Hindus and SC residents. The final decision of all residents, whether in favour of or not, was to be accepted by both the parties:

[173] Vijay Prasad; Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 134
[174] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay; "From Alienation to Integration: Changes in the Politics of Caste in Bengal, 1937-47", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, 31, 3 (1994), p. 358

the SCs and caste Hindus.[175] Therefore, these bills were only providing an 'option' for temple entry, not a right of temple entry. It seems that on the one hand, the Congress was showing that it was sincere for removal of religious restrictions of the SCs. On the other hand, they were providing a 'veto' power in hands of caste Hindus. In a real sense, the Congress was not ready to provide any substantial rights to the SCs.

The government of UP passed an Act entitled the UP Removal of Social Disabilities Act, 1947. It laid down that "no person shall prevent any person, merely on the ground that he belongs to a SC, from having access to all public tanks, wells, river, sanitary convenience, roads etc., which are opened to other Hindus; using or enjoying at any time or place, any public conveyance, including a *Dola Palki*, which other Hindus have right to use; having access to any public temple or enjoying the advantages, facilities and privileges of any such temple to the extent the same are available to other Hindus...."[176] The Government of Bombay Province threw open temples through an Act in 1947.[177] The Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act was brought into force on June 2, 1947. Under this Act, many temples in the province had been opened for Harijan and other excluded castes.[178] On the one hand, the Provincial Governments were opening the gates of temples, and on the other hand, there were some reports of clashes between caste Hindus and untouchables. Some caste Hindus and Harijans in Bombay city resorted to throwing of stones and sodawater bottles at each other and the police were forced to open fire on both occasions to disperse them. In all, five rounds were fired because of which two Harijans were injured. The caste Hindus also stabbed a Harijan and threw a bulb containing acid at a Harijan woman who received injuries.[179] This could be a result of the law which favoured Dalits and passed temple entry bills, removal of the social disabilities bills in various provinces.

The question arises that why the Congress considered temple entry so important at this juncture. It is important to note that, at this time Dalits themselves did not believe in the temple entry movement. Ambedkar gave up his movement after Kaliram temple movement

[175] Home – Political, File No. 24/8/38-Poll; 24/11/38-Poll; and 13/5/39-Poll, NAI
[176] Ministry of Home Affairs – Political Section, File No. 13/5/47-Poll (I), UP Removal of Social Disabilities Bill, 1947, NAI, pp. 2-3
[177] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public (A) Section, File No. 38/33/47-Pub (A), The Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Bill, 1947, NAI, pp. 23-24; The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Thursday, August 29, 1946, p. 13
[178] Ministry of Home Affairs – Political Section, File No. 18/6/47-Poll (I), Reports and Returns Fortnightly from Provinces for the Month of June, 1947, NAI, p. 4
[179] Ibid., p. 10

and expressed the hollowness of these activities. Dalits in UP claimed that temple entry was not important for them. Shankranand Shastri, a Dalit writer and companion of Ambedkar, argued that Dalits never raised the question of temple entry themselves. It was the creation of caste Hindus only.[180] He blamed Gandhi and his Congress for raising the temple entry issue. For example, not surprisingly, twenty-five small Hindu temples that had been opened for the use of untouchables in 1934 when Gandhi visited Kanpur soon fell into disuse owing to the lack of interest of untouchables.[181] Dalits did not want to go in the temples, because they understood that their emancipation lay in political and economic change for which struggles were needed. But the Congress raised this issue to divert their energy from their movement and to instil a false sense of satisfaction among them.

Purusottam Dass Kureel declared that there would be no benefit from temple entry for Harijans. It did not mean, in any sense, the upliftment of the Harijans. He told Gandhi "that you need not take the trouble as we cannot profit by it in the least. It is not within the bounds of possibility to bring about an uplift of the Harijans by securing their admission into the Hindu temples and their courtyards which the Mahatma has more than once called homes of prostitutes, or by making the Harijans fold their hands before the stone idols which Rabindra [Nath Tagore], the preceptor of the Mahatma and a poet of great repute has called Godless matter or stone statues, and which in the words of Maharshi Dayanand are mere pictures of stone, or by making them wash thresholds and ring bells of the temples, or by obtaining an opportunity for them to draw a jar of water from a bath in public wells, or by gaining permission for Harijans to take a bath in public tanks where animals bathe and quench their thirst and where men women soap and wash their dirty clothes, or by getting them a chance to sit on a *Chabutra* or by opening a few night school for them, or by the demonstration of sweeping Mall roads once or twice by a casual or by proclaiming that particular Vakil cleaned a particular drain or a latrine in a *Mohalla*. Actually, there is a need for structural and drastic changes in the social, political and economic spheres, which can really benefit the untouchables. Otherwise, all this will go in vain and remain a head-line maker only."[182]

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[180] Shankranand Shastri; Poona Pact Banam Gandhi (Poona Pact versus Gandhi), Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1946 (15th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 2005), p. 71

[181] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 176

[182] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p. 16

The Question of Dignity: Exclusion and Inclusion from SCs

The Dalit movement instilled an urge for dignified lives among Dalits. Sometimes, it was expressed within the framework of Sanskritization; for example in the case of Jatav and Dusadh castes. Sometimes the process of Sanskritization proved unsuccessful when, for instance, Jatavs asked for a lower status in the Hindu social hierarchy. These kinds of processes issued appeals and requests to British government. They expressed that they did not want to remain with the stigma of impurity. The first example came from the Jatav caste. It was an important caste in the low caste movement. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, in a process of Sanskritization, they claimed the *Kshatriya* status and associated themselves with the Arya Samaj. A crucial shift occurred in their identity politics after the Poona Pact. Ambedkar emerged as their prominent leader.[183] The All India Jatav Youth League, Agra submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy to acknowledge their separate identity among SCs. They claimed that the Jatav was a separate and distinct caste, not a sub-section of Chamar. At this stage, they were moving away from the process of Sanskritization. The Education Department of UP issued a circular that "there is no objection to the use of the word Jatav in place of the word Jatav (Chamar) in the records of educational institutions."[184]

A Conference of the Jatav Youth League, Agra, in May 1936 viewed that the association of Jatav with Chamar was a matter of great humiliation and disgrace for them. They wanted to remove the stigma attached with the Chamar. So people belonging to the Jatav caste were desirous of having themselves entered as a separate class in the list of SCs.[185] They passed a resolution that "this Conference recommends to the Government of India and Provincial Governments to include the Jatav caste in the list of the SCs for the purpose of ensuing elections to the new Provincial Legislatures, the Federal Legislatures and the Local Boards."[186]

During the 1940s, questions of identity became more important, especially for low castes. Therefore, there were many petitions for seeking admission in the list of the SCs.

[183] For more details see Chapter 2 of thesis & also Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 141
[184] Reforms Office – Federation, File No. 44/38-Fed., Memorial for the All-India Jatav Youth League, Agra Requesting for the Recognition of the Jatav Caste as a Separate and Distinct Caste and its Inclusion in the List of SCs, NAI, p.11
[185] Ibid., p. 24
[186] Ibid., p. 12

Dusadhs of UP also requested the Government of India for their inclusion in the list of the SCs. Dusadhs in Bihar were enlisted as a Scheduled Caste. But in UP, they were not enlisted. The population of the Dusadhs in UP was seventy five thousand. The Dusadh Sabha of Ballia District called a conference on the 11th and 12th of January, 1947 at Sahtwar in Ballia district. Vishwanath Ram, M.A., LL.B., (General Secretary of the UP Dusadh Sabha) presided the conference. The conference passed a resolution, which requested to the Government of India to include Dusadh caste in the list of SCs. The resolution further stated that after repeated requests, the matter was still in consideration and pending. The delay was very harmful in the interest of seventy five thousand depressed human beings who have been deprived of their due rights for no faults of their own.[187]

At the same time, there were some castes which appealed the Government for their exclusion from the list of the SCs. For example, Kori caste requested the Government of India for its exclusion from the list of SCs in UP. The Kori Sabha, Jhansi, on the behalf of twenty thousand members of the community, living in Bundelkhand and Central India, expressed their resentment over the inclusion of Kori caste in the list of SCs for the purpose of election of the Central Assembly. In their memorandum submitted to the Viceroy, they stated that "there is no justification for the Government of India to create division in our social status by treating the members of Kori caste in the whole of the UP except Meerut, Agra and Rohilkhand as divisions among SCs. The Sabha further informed the Government that the Kories of India have always been classified amongst the touchable castes with right to *Sanskaras* and the sacred thread. They had no association with untouchables or SCs. [188] It is important to note that in 1939, on the contrary, the UP Kori Conference, Cawnpore, organised a summit. They declared that "they are pleased to be enlisted as SCs because it would provide a chance for their educational, economic and political development. Their children would get scholarships and services in government sector."[189] The Government did not take action to exclude Kori caste from the list of the SCs.

These appeals and resolutions demonstrate that Dalits have become more aware about their position in Indian society. Some of them wanted to be united as one large community in

[187] Ministry of Law – Reforms, File No. 114/47-R, Request by the Dushdhs of UP inclusion in list of SC in the Scheduled Castes Order in Council, NAI, p. 4
[188] Reforms Office – Federation, File No. 44/38-Fed., Memorial from the Kori Sabha, Jhansi, protesting against the inclusion of the Koris among the Scheduled Castes, NAI, p. 15-16
[189] Presidential Address by Lotan Ram Thekedar at UP Kori Conference, Cawnpore on December 2-3, 1939, pp. 5-6

the form of the SCs. At the same time, the question of their dignity has become important for them. It became obvious that the British rule in India was going to end eventually. Therefore, the questions regarding position of Dalits in independent India became more significant. Many castes wanted a dignified life. They did not want to carry out the stigma of untouchability and disgrace.

Conclusion

The Dalit movement underwent a crucial change from 1934 to 1947. They started their movement with the Poona Pact. After two elections, they were convinced that it was a conspiracy of Gandhi and caste Hindus to prevent the political development of Dalits. Many local Dalit leaders, Piarelal Kureel, Karan Singh Kane, Purusottam Dass Kureel, Badloo Ram Sonkar, Mewa Lal, etc., emerged, which is a clear indicator that Dalits were becoming a politicized group. Dalits favoured British rule till 1946. After the denial of status of 'a separate element in the national life of India' by the Cabinet Mission, a change occurred in the ideology of Dalit leadership. They started a Satyagraha for a separate identity. Ambedkar even warned the British government about a catastrophe more serious than the 'August Disturbances' of the Congress in 1942. It was an impact of the Satyagraha that there were strikes of Chamars, Kahars, Sweepers, etc. for higher wages. Still no substantial change occurred in the discriminatory mentality of caste Hindus. Gandhian notion of the '*Hridya Privartan*' did not prove much successful.

We can sum up the overall impact of the Dalit movement in the words of Purusottam Dass Kureel in 1947. "They begged and begged again and again, and were reduced to shameless political baggers. They were more than once insulted and driven away like buffoons. They have learned a great lesson from their bitter past. They will now depend more on their organised strength and struggle than on the political charity of the Congress or the British Government. They will fight and fight till the last man is left, for the achievement of their rights. They will fill jails and face bullets but will never surrender. Kureel earnestly appeal to the British Government *NOT* to over look their question of safety of life and property. If it is overlooked then the consequences will be disastrous. 'We shall fight to Death', this will be our slogan at this critical juncture."[190]

[190] Secretariat of the Governor General – Reforms – File No. 41/26/47-R, Representation Related to Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of SCs, NAI, p. 20

Chapter 4

Proliferation of the Dalit Print Culture in the Post-Independence Era: 1948-1978

> "The chain of slavery was broken. Independence came [on 15 August, 1947]. But this feeling [of independence] started waning after few days. The people's distrust towards independence became evident. Whether a villager or a city-dweller, with few exceptions, the common man began thinking that slavery [under British rule] was far better than this independence. Why did he think so? The answer is very clear: the independence which he had imagined did not come. Independence did not reach the common man."[1]

India attained independence on 15 August, 1947. After 40 years a Dalit from Allahabad wrote a booklet in Hindi called '*Jhoothi Aazadi*' (Fake Independence). This booklet expressed the opinion that for the Dalits even British rule was a benevolent one as compared to the hegemony of caste Hindus which was notorious for its oppression and exploitation. The irony behind the so-called 'national independence' was not lost on the Dalits. For them 'real' independence was yet to come.

Why did this feeling become widespread among the Dalits? What was the meaning of independence for them? These are some of the basic issues that I have tried to grapple with in this chapter. After independence there was no basic change in the situation of the Dalits. The continuation of atrocities convinced them that it was not their freedom; that they will have to start another movement for their 'real libration' from caste Hindus. This awareness played a crucial role in the spread of the Dalit print culture in UP. In this chapter, the first section surveys the atrocities perpetrated on the Dalits with special reference to UP. The second section deals with the proliferation of the Dalit print culture in UP. In the last section, I have selected a few Dalit booklets to bring out a coherent picture of the Dalit print culture of these times and also to illustrate the issues and themes which figured in their writings.

[1] Guru Prasad Madan; Jhoothi Aazadi (Fake Independence), Reeva: Bharatiya Baudh Parishad, 1987, p. 15 (translation mine from Hindi)

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While pointing out his views on the making of the 'national' government, N. Shivraj, the president of the AISCF, averred: "My fear is in the name of so-called national government which will be sought to be run by vested interests. The old order will be kept up and the common man will not get a fair deal. But we must ask for an equitable distribution of employment, trade and commerce. We cannot for all time be content to do or compelled to do dirty, loathsome and unprofitable work that has been imposed on us by reason of the custom of untouchability."[2]

By the end of 1946, it had become clear that the British would leave India very soon. Though the Dalits were enthusiastic for the end of the colonial regime yet, at the same time, they were doubtful of the commencement of the rule of caste Hindus. Even Jagjivan Ram, Labour Member of the Interim Government, said that "[I]t was in 1932 that the Poona Pact was signed and during the past 15 years, except for the opening of a few schools for the Harijans, nothing has been done. We have, therefore, per force to doubt the honesty of our benefactors…. Freedom from the British rule as hoped for in June next year did not mean freedom for Harijans of India as they were labouring under two-fold slavery of the British and the Hindus. It was proper for Hindus to declare independence for the Depressed Classes also as the foreign rulers had done for them."[3]

The United Provinces Congress Committee (UPCC) issued letters of instruction to all the district and city Congress Committees for the celebration of Independence Day. The UPCC resolved that "[we have] to establish democracy [in our country]. We have to provide a happy life to the farmers and labours. We have to remove the deep difference in our society and also remove the unemployment and poverty. Empowerment of people would be the aim of our Provincial Government. In a definite time, increase in the income of people, providing work and education to all and development of villages [would be the aims of our government]."[4] "As India is emerging into freedom, the blot of untouchability must immediately be removed if freedom is to have any meaning for nearly five crores of Indian [untouchables] and if India is to hold a place

[2] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, May 9, 1945, p. 5
[3] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Tuesday, April 20, 1947, p. 2
[4] AICC Papers, File No. G-60/ 1947, NMML (translation mine from Hindi)

of honour in the community of nations. The Congress and Congressmen must, therefore, attend this urgent task of national self-purification."[5]

Atrocities on Dalits

At the beginning of 1947, the date of independence was announced. Then many Congress leaders began to feel like rulers in independent India. Therefore, there were many a news items regarding growing indiscipline in the Congress party in UP. There was no effective action taken by the UP Congress Disciplinary Action Committee. The Allahabad District Congress Committee wrote a letter (dated May 22, 1947) to the AICC regarding indiscipline, corruption, misbehavior, etc. in the election of local bodies by the Congressmen. Similar complaints were also received from Moradabad (dated May 1947) and Lucknow (dated April 14, 1947). Tarachand Maheshwari, member, UP Congress Committee from Sitapur, apprehended dangerous consequences of such instances of rampant indiscipline. Maheshwari said in a letter (dated May 9, 1947) that the Congress was rewarding 'bad people'. Another Congress leader, Rama Shankar Uppadhyaya, Minister, District Congress Committee, Azamgarh, reported on corruption and social indifference among District Congress Committee members.[6]

Earlier the Congress was the party of educated people alone but now the poor and the illiterate made up the bulk of their party. So, leaders had to take some steps. Common people had joined the Congress, devoted their whole lives to it; they went to prison, they ignored their families, they ruined the future generations. But, the Congress seemed to ignore the voice of the ordinary Congressmen.[7] A letter made it clear that "Today India is an independent India. But the poor Indian is not independent. They are not living happy life. Then, this freedom in not for them… *Swaraj* has come for rich Indians only."[8] Further, it was reported that the rampant corruption in distributing license for coal, paper, iron, etc. had become a culture in the government. Government officials were not working for the common masses. They demanded

[5] AICC Papers, File No. CPD-2, CPD-6/1947-48, NMML
[6] AICC Papers, File No. PC-18/1947 (Part 1), NMML **(**All these letters are available together in this file.)
[7] AICC Papers, File No. P-17/ 1947-48, NMML
[8] AICC Papers, File No. P-18 (Part II)/ 1947, NMML (translation mine from Hindi)

money for every function they performed.[9] Congressmen complained to the AICC that many local Congress leaders considered themselves as absolute rulers.

Apart from corruption, numerous incidents regarding atrocities on Dalits were reported from all parts of India. A Dalit, Zahoran Jaiswar from a village in Johnpur district in UP, wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru regarding the ill-treatment of the SCs: "after much struggle of years our country has got freedom, but we, the SCs, poor persons see no change and we are getting the same troubles which we were getting under the British control… The zamindar, M.S. Chobay, of my village sent *goondas* to my house and they badly beat up my son and looted the house… The zamindar has also forcefully taken land of my brother and Rs. 200 as *Heladi*… Due to his [zamindar's] *zulums* (atrocities) it has become hard for my family to stay in the house. The zamindar is also taking *Begar* from my family… When I filed a report against zamindar in police station, the zamindar gave bribe to police incharge. [As a result] the police incharge did not take action against zamindar.… The zamindar again attacked my family. When I went to the police station, the incharge said to me that since we are SCs we should live under the *zulums* of the rich persons…."[10]

A monthly letter for November, 1947 of the Harijan Sevak Sangh reported on severe repression of Dalits by Jats in the villages of Rohtak district in Punjab. Gandhi found nothing new in this news. He pointed out that constraints on the liberty of Dalits were prevalent in British times too. The new thing that he noticed was that after independence persecutions had become more pronounced instead of dying out.[11]

In another monthly letter of January 1948, reports of harassment of Dalits by Jats were received from Panipat, East Punjab. Although *Begar* had been prohibited by law, the 'Harijans' were being forced to do *begar* labour by the Jats. Upon refusal, they were turned out of their houses, their women-folk molested, their cattle not allowed to graze on the common land and they were denied access to public wells. They were also victims of unjust tax.[12] The UP

[9] AICC Papers, File No. G-59/ 1947, NMML
[10] AICC Papers, File No. G-18 (KWI)/1947-48, NMML
[11] AICC Papers, File No. CPD-2, CPD-6/1947-48, NMML
[12] AICC Papers, File No. G-19 (KWI)/1946-48, NMML

Government claimed that "the evil of forced labour is fast disappearing."[13] But the Minister of Communications, Government of India, Jagjivan Ram categorically said, "Though the Constitution has made the exaction of forced labour illegal and though it has no longer any legal sanction, involuntary or forced labour is still prevalent in the countryside in many States. Customary rights are used whenever Harijans refuse to work and they are harassed in various ways. They have neither the skill nor the resources to go to law courts. Another difficulty is that they do not get witnesses to support their case."[14]

Another instance came to light when the Chamars of Dagrauli village in Jind State wrote a letter to Jagjivan Ram, Labour Member, Government of India, regarding a 'curfew' imposed by the zamindar of their village on 400 Dalits in June 1948. They claimed that their people and animals would die of starvation. The zamindar also closed off the road leading to the well and also refused drinking water to them. They maintained that they were forced to reduce the price of shoes to 14 annas only instead of Rs. 5/- to Rs. 10/- at least. The Tehsildar of Dalmia Dadri did not listen their case as he was influenced by the zamindar.[15] The Dalits of Bailali village in Jind State and Rani village in Patiala also 'allegedly' accused the caste Hindus of blocking roads and locking them in their houses as also of refusing to let them graze their animals etc.[16] The very fact that the Dalits could muster enough courage to register a complaint against the Caste Hindus is evidence enough of the gravity of the situation. Given an overwhelming representation of the Caste Hindus in the administration it is quite logical that had there been no such instances no Dalit could have dared to file a complaint against the Caste Hindus. Taking note of these reports when Prof. Yashwant Rai raised a question in the Constituent Assembly regarding the ill-treatment of 'Harijans' in East Punjab, and asked the government as to what steps had been taken in this matter, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Minister for

[13] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 74/124/52, All India Harijan legislators and Workers' Convention in Nagpur on 1/11/52-Resolution adopted therein, NAI, p. 43
[14] Presidential address at All India Scheduled Castes Legislators and Workers' Convention in Nagpur on 1/1/52 in Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 74/124/52, NAI
[15] Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 326-P/48, Alleged ill-treatment of Harijans in Patiala & East Punjab States Union, NAI, p. 5
[16] Ibid., pp. 21-22 & 25

Home Affairs, simply answered that it being a matter relating to the Provincial Government, the Government of India had no concern with it.[17]

One of the major causes of atrocities on Dalits was the 'tradition' of unpaid labour or *Begar*. *Begar* was a social and economic evil for Dalits which affected them severely. Caste Hindus have possession of all resources, from land to money and so on. Despite that they were not paying the wages of Dalits. They took *Begar* from them.[18] On January 26, 1950, the Constitution of India came into force. It theoretically closed the room for discrimination and brought the scourge of untouchability into the ambit of punishable offence. According to the article 17 of the Constitution, untouchability was abolished.[19] But in practice, there was little difference. A government official went on record that "I know that in the C.P. there is a law which says that all public wells are open to the SCs and that anybody causing obstruction could be punished. As a matter of experience, however, I also know that opposition from caste Hindus was so strong that it was only rarely that action against obstruction was taken."[20] This can very well be illustrated from an incident of humiliation of a Dalit called Amar Singh from Kattu village in Patiala State. In October 1950, Amar Singh fetched water from a caste Hindu well. The Nambardar, Jang Singh punished him declaring that he "should be painted black on face, made to ride a donkey and driven through every street of the village."[21] The Government reports admitted that despite the enactment of the law for safeguarding the SCs they are not safe from the wrath of the caste Hindus. One official claimed that "I may place my observations on record that there may be so many instances of this type [forced labour/*Begar*] occurring in each part of the country which though not countenanced by law, are actually being practised by zamindars, money-lenders, etc…."[22] The Ministry of Labour also confirmed the prevalence of the practice of *Begar* and its refusal by Dalits was the main reason of tension between caste Hindus and

[17] Ministry of Home Affairs – Police – File No. 8/3/48, Question in the Constituent Assembly by Prof. Yashwant Rai regarding harassment of Harijans in East Punjab and Steps proposed to be taken in the matter, NAI, p. 2
[18] A collection of poems by Depressed Classes' poets; Harijan-Gohar Chhoot Chattisi, Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1956, p. 2
[19] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 90
[20] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 51/69/49, SCs – Measures suggested by the Labour Federation for SCs, NAI, p. 6
[21] Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 3 (81)-P/50, Balabouring of a Harijan named Amar Singh of Village Kattu, P.O. Dhanaula, District Barnala for taking water from the well of Santa Singh, NAI, p. 6
[22] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 51/69/49, SCs – Measures suggested by the Labour Federation for SCs, NAI, p. 2

them.[23] The police also demanded *Begar* from Dalits. When Dalits of Bithmara village refused it, the Police Sub-Inspector fired at three people and killed them. No action was taken against the culprit.[24]

To prevent *Begar* and protect the Dalits, the SC Labour Federation, Delhi, requested the Government of India for the appointment of SCs as Special Officers in each district of the country. They should be directly under the Provincial or Central Governments, not the district authorities.[25] The Central Government appointed the first Commissioner for SCs and STs on November 18, 1950. He raised the question of independent status for the office from the very beginning. Every year a large number of complaints were received in the Commissioner's office. Due to inadequate staff, a number of them could not be attended to by study-cum-investigation teams. Further, the Commissioner had no police or enforcement powers to investigate adequately and take prompt action. He did not have the power to subpoena witnesses and documents to carry out a proper investigation into complaints.[26] Therefore, while on the one hand, the Government fulfilled the demand of the Dalits, on the other, without the provision of adequate staff and power, it became a toothless institution.

While talking about the roots of atrocities caused by caste Hindus, Ambedkar, then the Law Minister, argued in a public function in Delhi that Hindu religion is based on violence, idol worship, social discrimination and orthodox religious scriptures. To him contemporary Hinduism was nothing but Brahmanism which was responsible for the degradation of India. But Purusottam Sarraf, probably a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, countered Ambedkar through a pamphlet saying that "there is no place of violence among Hindus. Hindus are the most non-violent and vegetarian on the earth… There is no social or caste-based discrimination among Hindus. Today's educated Hindu does not consider this type of conservative ideas…

[23] Ibid., p. 3
[24] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 51/69/49, SCs – Measures suggested by the Labour Federation for SCs, NAI, p. 5; Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 512-P/48, Shooting incident at Bithmara, Tehsil Narwana, District Sangrur (Patiala Union) resulting in the death of three Harijans, NAI, pp. 7-8; Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 3 (76)-P/49, Death of three Harijans in Village Bithmara (Tehsil Narwana), NAI, pp. 1-2
[25] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 51/69/49, SCs – Measures suggested by the Labour Federation for SCs, NAI, pp. 5 & 12-13
[26] P.A. James & G. Sreenivas Reddy; "Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 14, No. 26 (Jun. 30, 1979), p. 1102

Brahmanism, once a social evil, was prevalent in old times but today there is no sign of that evil. The discussion on Brahmanism in today's society is only a worthless topic, nothing else."[27] The foregoing statement is proved totally false in the light of such instances of violence and caste-based discrimination by caste Hindus against the Dalits. Instead, such a violation of the human rights of the Dalits prove that instead of progressing forward we have regressed to the dark times that Sarraf admits of having existed once.

To illustrate this point further, another instance is worth mentioning. In 1958, more than 40 SC employees of the Railway Department at Agra Cantonment Railway Station complained regarding ill-treatment and discrimination by R.S. Banarsi Dass, tea contractor, and Chhammi Singh, mobile tea shop owner at Agra Cantonment Railway Station. According to them, these individuals served tea to the Dalits either in earthen pots or in broken tumblers kept separately for them. They also incited passengers to not take tea at Nathumal's shop who did not indulge in the practice of separating plates of the Dalits from the non-Dalits.[28]

Apart from these atrocities, Dalits were little represented in the political system in UP. Before independence, Dalits raised the question of their inclusion into the Congress Cabinets and the Congress Working Committee. That time, Gandhi and other Congress leaders denied them entry. But after independence their position remained almost the same. The Congress formed its government for many years in UP. Christophe Jaffrelot argues that "in 1968, three-fourths of the members of the UP Congress Committee were from the higher castes; there was not even one representative of the low castes and one SC member among the presidents of its branches at the district or town level. The social profile of the Congress governments in the 1950s – 1960s reproduces the same pattern."[29] He further emphasized that "the stability of the upper caste' over-representation in the UP government over three decades is astonishing. From the late 1930s till the late 1960s the upper caste accounted for two-thirds (or even three quarters) of ministers and never less than 59 percent… The SCs always had a handful of ministers, which maintained

[27] All India Hindu Maha Sabha Papers, (hereafter AIHMS Papers), File No. 134/1951, NMML (translation mine from Hindi).
[28] Railway – Traffic Commercial (Traffic General III) – File No. 1026-TG-III/1958/IR/16/1-31, Catering – Tea Stall and Tea Trolley at Agra Cantt. Railway Station – Alleged discriminatory treatment to Harijans by Contractor, NAI, pp. 6-9
[29] Christophe Jaffrelot; India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, p. 67

their representation at a low rather than a marginal level. The most striking statistics concern the low castes, who could manage only a couple of representatives. The Congress therefore appeared to be dominated by a tripolar elite of Brahmins/professionals, Banyas/businessmen and Rajputs/landlords."[30]

Dalits in Government Services

In October, 1949, the SC Uplift Union, Delhi, asked the Central Government regarding the vacant posts of clerks, typists, peons, daftries, drivers etc. against their reservation. But the government answered that it had not been able to secure the services of suitable SC candidates for appointments.[31] Similar apologies were forwarded many times.[32] But there were many instances when skilled Dalits did not get jobs.[33] They did not easily get government loans for opening their small companies and *karkhanas* (small industries). It was claimed by Banwari Lal, a Shilpkaar, that "our caste people are not considered for loan while the upper caste Hindus easily get all government facilities."[34]

Distribution of SCs in Central Government Services, 1953-80 (%)

	1953	1961	1963	1967	1974	1980
Class 1	0.53	1.2	1.78	2.08	3.2	4.95
Class 2	1.29	2.5	2.98	3.1	4.6	8.54
Class 3	4.52	7.2	9.24	9.33	10.3	13.44
Class 4	20.52	17.2	17.15	18.18	18.6	19.46

(Source: Jaffrelot, 2003, p.92)

This table clearly shows after 33 years of independence, the Central Government had far from satisfactory implementation of affirmative programme regarding SCs' reservation. The

[30] Ibid., pp. 67-68
[31] Ministry of Home Affairs – Admn – File No. 68/3/50-Admn, Recruitment of SCs-Letter from the SCs, NAI, pp, 1,3
[32] Ministry of Home Affairs – NGS – File No. 9/6/50, Question in the Parliament- Question by Shri Sonavane regarding percentage of representation in favour of SCs under the Central Services, NAI, p. 3
[33] Baldev Singh Arya Papers (hereafter BSA Papers), File: Conversation with Ummed Singh Arya, 1950, NMML
[34] BSA Papers, File: Conversation with Banwari Lal, 1951, NMML

quota for the SCs was fulfilled only in the fourth class. The higher ranking posts remained almost un-represented.

Ram Ratan, the President of SCs Satyagraha Committee presented 16 demands for the upliftment of the SCs to the President of Indian Union in 1954. Some of the major demands included the setting up of a separate Ministry for SCs; effective reservation in all categories or services in Central or State Governments [not on papers only]; appointment of SCs in police services; all the land accumulated by Vinoba Bhave and other organizations should be distributed among the SCs; the levy of Sales-tax on the trade of shoes should be finished; separate electorate instead of joint electorate etc.[35] Many of these demands were not fulfilled: separate Ministry, separate electorates, land re-distribution, practical reservation etc. Dalits were not happy with the election system. Separate electorates for them was their last hope for a real uplift. Their representatives in Parliament or Legislative Assemblies were very few in number when compared to their population. This had played a crucial role in their struggle for freedom.

II

Proliferation of Dalit Print

Ab Zamana Vah nahi hai,
Zulm jati mat saho,
Tor do Zanzeer zakri,
Kyon gulami me raho?[36]

The world has changed,/ Do not tolerate atrocities on [your] community,/ break the suffocating chains,/ why live in slavery?[37]

Before independence, Dalits were governed by Brahmanical traditions and religious customs. The attainment of independence brought a significant change in their position. After the

[35] Ministry of Home Affairs – RPS – File No. 20/4/54, SCs-Hunger Strike since 24/3/54 for their 16 requirements (demands) at Rajghat, New Delhi, NAI, pp. 1-4
[36] Pamphlet of the Second All India Jaiswar Grand Conference, 21-22 May, 1949.
[37] Translation mine from Hindi

enforcement of the Constitution of India in 1950 they were all citizens of India. There was a hope that now caste Hindus would accept them on the basis of the *rights* provided by the Constitution. Equality, fraternity, and freedom would be new values of new country. But this could not be. Discrimination, persecution and exploitation of Dalits increased despite constitutional safeguards.[38] Even Jagjivan Ram pronounced in 1952 at All India Scheduled Castes Legislators and Workers' Convention in Nagpur that, "though, there are now laws in several States lifting all social and civic disabilities under which the SCs have been suffering, these have mostly remained a dead letter and have not been put into actual practice."[39] This continuation in atrocities stimulated the Dalits into giving vent to their feelings in the popular print media. Such an intervention in the public sphere brought about a significant shift and their voice gradually became more confident and vigorous with time. Before independence, the primary engagement of the Dalit intellectuals was to spread awareness regarding their backwardness and the importance of their status as the original inhabitants of India among the Dalit folks. They were convinced that the reasons for their degraded status were not God's creation, rather it was a conspiracy of Brahmanism. After the so-called independence in 1947, they were still slaves of caste Hindus. There were numerous instances of caste discrimination against Dalits after independence.[40]

In the post-independence period, Dalit popular booklets expressed disillusionment with the Indian State due to the unfulfilled promises made at the time of Independence. Dalit intellectuals often recorded their resentment towards State policies in the '*Preface*' and '*Introduction*' of their booklets. Although, they did not write exclusively about government policies in separate booklets yet they have clearly pointed out the failure of government in various sectors. At the same time, paradoxically, the growing consciousness among them was also due to various efforts made by the State to make them aware of their rights and their share in the development projects launched by the State. Whereas the State was creating a self-awareness

[38] Dalits have been guaranteed under the very Preamble of the Constitution equality of status and of opportunity. In view of their backwardness in various fields in the corporate life of the nation, they have also been guaranteed other fundamental rights. Untouchability has been abolished and there is prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

[39] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 74/124/52, All India Harijan legislators and Workers' Convention in Nagpur on 1/11/52-Resolution adopted therein, NAI, p. 31

[40] Bhadant Dr. Anand Koshalyayan; Manusmriti Jalai Gai Kyon? (Why Manusmriti was burned?), Lucknow: Cultural Publishers, 1981, pp. 4-12

among the Dalits, it failed miserably to fulfill their growing aspirations and desires. According to Badri Narayan, "the single coherent elite version of nationalism, which the State had been feeding the people through its various media channels, was ruptured by the creation of alternative Dalit narratives about the role of lower caste heroes in the nationalist movement. They also started demanding protective discrimination in the form of reservations in education and jobs. The logic posited by them was that earlier they had been the ruling communities but the conspiracies of the upper castes had deprived them of their historic glorious status. They had also made a significant contribution towards freeing and building up the nation but this has been overlooked after Independence by the upper castes who deliberately kept them backward."[41]

The Adi Hindu movement and later on Ambedkar's movement inspired many people to establish printing presses for the publication of Dalit literature. Babu Ramcharan in Lucknow (1920); Swami Acchutanand in Kanpur (1925); Munshi Hariprasad Tamta in Almora (1934); Jatav Vir Manikchand in Agra (1936); Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu in Lucknow (1957); and Lalayee Singh Yadav in Jhinjhak (1958) established printing presses.[42] It was the result of their arduous initiatives that many more newspapers/magazines were launched both before and after Independence from various places in UP. Some important newspapers and magazines have been listed in the following table.[43]

Table: 1

Newspaper/ Magazine	**Place of Publication**	**Years of Publication**	**Editor**
Nishad Samachar	Lucknow	1920-?[44]	Babu Ramcharan
Shri Jatav Mahasabha	Agra	1920 to 1921[45]	Sundarlal Sagar

[41] Badri Narayan; Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2006, p. 56
[42] I will discuss the mechanism of establishment of Dalit printing presses in chapter 5 of the thesis.
[43] This table is based on researcher's interviews with the Dalit writers and publishers and Sheoraj Singh Bechain's Hindi ki Dalit Patrakarita Par Patrakar Ambedkar ka Prabhav (1997).
[44] Personal interview with Nand Lal Verma, Grandson of Babu Ramcharan, (age 78), Lucknow on 25 February, 2008 at 5.00 pm
[45] Ramanarayana Yadavendu; Yaduvansh Ka Itihaas, (History of Yaduvansh) Agra: Navyug Sahitya Niketan, 1942, p. 201

Acchut	Delhi	1923 to 1924[46]	Swami Acchutanand
Jatav	Agra	1924 to 1926[47]	Master Hetram
Adi Hindu	Kanpur	1925 to 1933[48]	Swami Acchutanand
Samta	Almora	1934 to 1984[49]	Munshi Hariprasad Tamta
Yadav Kshatriya	Bulandshahar and Aligarh	1936 to 1938[50]	Pratap Bhanu Singh Yadav
Jivan	Agra	1936 to 1947	Jatav Vir Manikchand
Adhikar	Bareilly	1935 to 1940	Dharam Prakash
Dinesh	Delhi	1938 to 1939	Balwant Soni
Dalit Prakash	Aligarh	1947 - ?	Lakshmi Shankar & Shri Lalit
Parivartan	Aligarh	1950-?	Swami Ajudhyanath Dandi
Manav Kalyan	Delhi	1952 to 1962	Dharam Prakash
Sihnaad	?	1957 to 1985[51]	Advocate Sundarlal Sagar
Zameen Ke Tare	Aligarh	1962 to 1967[52]	Mewaram Mahashay
Republican Times	Aligarh	1962 to 1990[53]	Raghuveer Singh "Rahee"
Shoshit Pukar	Bulandshahar	1966- ?	Balveer Singh Azad
Bheem Sainik	Meerut	1970 to 1992[54]	P.S.Maurya
Samta Shakti	Meerut	1972 to 1973	Mohandas Naimisharay

[46] Its first edition, dated April, 1923, is available in the personal library of Guru Prasad Madan, Allahabad. For more details see Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[47] This newspaper was started by Bohare Khemchand in 1924. He appointed Master Hetram as editor and Dr. Dhan Singh as manager of newspaper. (Yadavendu; 1942, p. 201)

[48] Available edition of this paper is dated October 1927. Its mentioned that on the front page that 'year 2 and No. 1', which infers that it was started two year ago i.e. 1925. (For more details, Guru Prasad Madan; Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[49] Last available edition of newspapers. (Bechain, 1997, p. 255)

[50] This fortnightly newspaper was started from Bulandshahar. After one year it was published from Aligarh in a new look. (Yadavendu; 1942, p. 202)

[51] Last available edition of newspapers but there is no information of its publication place. (Bechain, 1997, p. 254)

[52] This newspaper was close down in 1967 but it was restarted in 1993 on the eve of hundred-birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. (Bechain, 1997, p. 257)

[53] Personal interview with A.R. Akella, (age 60) Dalit writer and publisher, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00 pm.

[54] Last available edition of newspapers (Bechain, 1997, p. 256)

Raka Toofan	Agra	1974 to 1976	B.S. Raka
Nirnay	Kanpur	1977 to 1978	Dr. Kawaldhari
Nirnayak Bheem	Kanpur	1978 to 1983	Dr. Kawaldhari
Nidar	Aligarh	1978 to 1982	Om Prakash 'Nidar'

However, many were short lived. The idea was to make an entry into the realm of journalism which was monopolized by caste Hindus. However, there was no acceptance of these journals in the mainstream public sphere because they expressed the ideas and views of the deprived sections of society who had never expressed their dissent. Usually, mainstream newspapers and magazines ignored Dalits and their news. This attitude played an important role in introducing their own newspapers and magazines where they could find their appropriate place in every sphere.[55] Agra, Kanpur, Aligarh were some of the prominent publication centers for Dalit journals. Many of these newspapers/journals were deeply concerned about raising their caste consciousness. *Shri Jatav Mahasabha, Jatav, Jivan, Dinesh, Adhikar* were started for the upliftment of the Jatav community in Agra, Delhi and other surrounding regions whereas *Acchut, Adi Hindu, Samta, Manav Kalyan, Republican Times, Shoshit Pukar, Raka Toofan* were dedicated to the cause of the Depressed Classes.

It is interesting to know that in the post-independence period, there were more than a hundred publication centers throughout UP. Small villages and *bastis* (colonies) were the major publication centers; however, they were not able to establish their own presses due to economic hardships. Some of the major publication centers were Bahujan Gyan Prakashan in Ajuha, Allahabad; Bahujan Gyan Prakashan, Bailly Goan, Allahabad; N.L. Jaiswar Seva Sadan, Pustak Bhandar in Rajapur, Allahabad; Hans Prakashan in Allahabad; Parbuddha Prakashan in Sanjay Gandhi Puram, Lucknow; Jai Bhim Sahitya Matth in Kuli Bazar, Kanpur; Samiksha Pustakalaya in Chowk, Kanpur; and, Bharti Prakashan in Mathura.

In addition to this, many Dalits were personally engaged in the publication of their booklets. Ravidasi, Kabirpanthi sants, and Buddhist monks also made a useful contribution in the

[55] Personal interview with Bhagat Singh Raka (editor of Raka Toofan newspaper), from Agra, 25 February, 2008.

publication of the Dalit literature.[56] Dalits were inclined to these faiths because they believed in equality, freedom, and brotherhood which were unimaginable in Hinduism.

The following table shows decade-wise availability of booklets from the teens to the seventies.[57]

Table: 2

Decade	Number of Publication
1911-20	1
1921-30	11
1931-40	12
1941-50	24
1951-60	62
1961-70	71
1971-78	79

The table shows a continuous growth over the decades. In the post-independence period the publication of Dalit booklets increased rapidly. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism played a crucial role in increasing publication by inspiring many Dalit and Buddhist (monks and laymen) intellectuals to write. There were more than a hundred publication centers in the UP. However, the total number of available booklets is 227 in the table. This is not a big number. But it has a history of neglect. There were many reasons for the small number of Dalit booklets. First, there was no preservation of Dalit literature in UP State Archive, Lucknow, in the Nehru Memorial Library and Museum, in the National Archives of India or in the Sahitya Academy, New Delhi. In these institutions, there is abundant material available on mainstream or 'national'

[56] Some of the names included were Swami Gulzardas Ji, Bhajanik Panchayati Ravidasa Mandir from Ayodhya, Faizabad; Pathik Sahayak Sangh from Agra; Dr. R.B. Singh from Ajuha, Allahabad; Hubba Lal Azad from Bhansara, Jhinjhak, (Kanpur); Ram Balak Singh from Korka, Fatehpur; Swami Bhagat Singh, Adi Niwasi Ravidaspanthi from Benajhabar, Kanpur; Shri Saddharam Pracharak Kabir Sabha in Kanpur; Ramadhar 'Prasad' from Jaunpur; Bhikshu G. Pragyanand from Risaldar Park, Lucknow; Amar Singh from Village Malhupur, Allahabad; Pustak Mandir in Mathura; Babu Malkhan Singh from Topkhana, Jalaon; Bhawani Prasad from Mauja Haripur. (These persons and publication centers have been traced during my field visits to Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Agra, Aligarh, Bareilly, Fatehpur, Koshambi and Unnao districts of UP from February 2007 to May 2011)

[57] Source: Ambedkar Buddha Shoudh Sansthan, Allahabad; Dalit Resource Centre, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad, and publications from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow and Ashok Pustakalaya, Kanpur.

movement but there is very little material on non-Brahman movements. Secondly, there was no government support for writing Dalit literature as only mainstream Hindi writers were awarded with prizes and honours. Thirdly, Dalit writers themselves were unaware of the importance of their literature. They understood their purpose as being directed only at the present generation. Its long term importance was lost on them. There are many community libraries in India (like the Marwari Library, Delhi) where communities preserved their history along with the mainstream material relating to the 'national' movement. But Dalits remained different in this regard. Singular instances of such endeavours by the Dalits can be traced to Cawnpore, Lucknow,[58] and Allahabad[59] but these remained just reading rooms only with no permanent traces left whatsoever.

III

Trends in Dalit Print

The social and political situation of the Dalits constituted the focus of Dalit print. Their booklets are based on their own interpretation of history which attempts to interpret Indian social history with a 'caste based view' and try to evoke the glory of the low castes. Brahmanical literature always portrayed the untouchables in a negative light. Therefore, a positive image of untouchables remained on the forefront of their literature. Their aim was to produce a literature which could inculcate a feeling of self-respect among the low castes. They thought that lack of self-respect and dignity were the major factors which led them to a subjugated position within the Hindu social order. Further, Dalit literature concentrated on political issues because they realized that it was the duty of the State to protect them. Since the State was not performing its duty adequately the primary concern in their literature was such issue based politics. Religion was yet another focus. They thought that because of caste Hindu mentality their development and progress could not be achieved. Further, the country was not governed by the Constitution of India but by the Brahmanical scriptures and *Manusmriti*. Therefore, they wrote booklets like

[58] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow); Sunday, December 20, 1936, p. 4 (the newspaper reported the annual election of office bearers in the Adi Hindu Library at Lucknow in 1936.)
[59] Badri Narayan; The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950-Present, New Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 2011, p. 78 (The Ambedkar Library in Allahabad was opened in 1935-36)

'*Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Rajnaitik Dacoity'*, (Political Dacoity on the Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), *Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Dharmik Dacoity'* (Religious Dacoity on the Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), '*Lokshahi Banam Brahmanshahi*' (Democracy versus Brahmanism), '*Manusmriti: Ek Pratikriya*' (Manusmriti: A Reaction), etc.

In this section, I have selected some booklets in order to bring out a coherent picture of Dalit print culture and also to show which issues and ideas dominated their writings. The selection of these booklets is made on the basis of their wide acceptance among the downtrodden people. In writing popular booklets, Dalit intellectuals were deeply concerned about exposing the misdeeds of the Aryan Brahmans and their 'holy' scriptures. Their writings did not dwell on the Muslim rule because their immediate oppressor was Hinduism. There are many references to the lower caste people getting converting to Islam but this conversion was related to their upward social mobility outside the fold of Hinduism. Sometimes, they were forced to convert but despite this Muslims were not as exploitative as caste Hindus. Hinduism directly attacked their existence and ruled out any possibility of equality in their social status. British rule was considered benevolent for the low castes. During the colonial period they were provided with a few political, religious, and social rights. At least, some new developments in the mode of communication like print culture allowed them a space of political self-articulation. The Census taught them about their numerical strength as well as about social deprivation. Law courts were supposed to observe equality in the eyes of law and government schools were at least notionally open to all.

Political Themes

After independence, Dalits became more conscious about their due place and rights in the new political and social scenario. The 'people's government' used its functionaries for safeguarding the interests of the higher castes of the society. Dalit dissent found expression in the form of popular poetry in the Hindi speaking belt. '*Shoshit Pukar*' (The Cry of the Oppressed) a collection of sixteen poems, was published from Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, Lucknow in 1956. These poems were written by poets of the Depressed Classes. The first poem '*Jagjivan-Stavan'* is related to Babu Jagjivan Ram, a prominent untouchable Congress leader, written by

Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu under the pseudonym of Rashtrakavi "Prakash" Lucknavi.[60] In the 1950s, Dalit intellectuals awarded him the title of Rashtrakavi in various poetry meets in Lucknow and other places in UP because of his true devotion towards the cause of the deprived sections.[61]

"Prakash" praises Jagjivan as one of the greatest leaders of the Congress, well-wisher of 'Harijans' and remover of troubles of the oppressed people. But he complains that despite his hard work Dalits are still oppressed and victims of injustice. He then asks, "For how long shall this 'dark age' continue?" What about the promises which were made to Dalits on the eve of independence? Artisans and labourers formed the majority (ninety per cent) of the Indian population but it was the capitalists, who constituted only ten percent, who ruled the [Indian] government. Is this real democracy? "Prakash" further asks Jagjivan as to how many more days the rule of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Baniyas would continue? When will be the rule of the Bahujan established? "Prakash" challenged Jagjivan to do something useful in favour of Bahujans or resign from the Congress and take the leadership of the Dalit movement for Bahujan community and become a true successor of Ambedkar.[62]

The poem shows that the Congress and its leadership are still unable to garner the trust of the low castes. Jagjivan was the second great leader of the low castes after Ambedkar. But he could not help Dalits. That is why the poet advised him to leave the Congress and join the real movement for the emancipation of Dalits.

Another of the remarkable poems is '*Utho Shoshit*' (Arise Oppressed) written by Ramswaroop Shastri 'Amar'. It tries to inculcate a sense of struggle against oppression. He encourages Dalits to stand on their own and not to mourn about their miserable conditions. It is ironical that at one time, they were the kings of India [before the advent of Aryans], but after

[60] Personal interview with Avinash Kumar (age 53) grandson of Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu on 25 February, 2008 at 4.00 pm.
[61] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am
[62] A collection of poems by Depressed Classes' poets; Shoshit Pukar, Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1956 (9th revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 1995), p. 1

getting "independence" from the British rule they still continue to be the slaves. Dalits must live with dignity and to achieve this dignity they must come forward.[63]

Ramsharan Vidharthi Kahar wrote another poem '*Shoshit-Garjan'* (The Roar of the Oppressed). Kahar states that the oppressed are brave people and it is their responsibility to remove corruption and ignorance. He exhorts them to spread the light of knowledge. He asks them to remove differences and fear among themselves by uniting in order to raise their consciousness. He asks the Dalits: "Why are you sleeping still when you know that you form the majority (ninety percent) which is ruled by the dominant caste people who constitute only ten percent of the population? Now you have to utilize your 'freedom' to the fullest and roar like a lion so that the oppressors begin to tremble."[64]

> The Varna system of Hinduism which is based on discrimination and untouchability is termed as Brahmanism. It is this Brahmanism which has been exploiting the ninety percent of the people by coining such words as 'fate,' 'god,' 'heaven,' 'hell,' and 'the deeds of previous lives.'[65]

These lines are taken from a booklet written by Lalayee Singh Yadav in 1961 titled '***Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Rajnaitik Dacoity'*** (Political Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State). In this booklet the author explained that *Sarvahara* people (Dalits and other backward castes) were ignorant and the cunning caste Hindus took advantage of this. They captured all political rights which the Britishers provided to the Hindus. During census enumeration they called untouchables Hindus and then established an absolute control over untouchables. They rendered the representation of the untouchables in the Assemblies inconsequential. They established the Harijan Sevak Sangh and falsely boasted of spending crores of money for the welfare of the Dalits. They not only deprived them of government services but also closed the doors of Small Scale Industries (SSIs) to the Dalits. On the other hand, they spent huge amounts

[63] Ibid; p. 3
[64] Ibid; pp. 15-16
[65] Lalayee Singh Yadav; Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Rajnaitik Dacoity, (Political Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), Jhinjhak (Kanpur): Ashok Pustakalya, 1961, p. 1 (translation mine from Hindi)

on Khadi Board Commission, Swaraj Ashram, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Social Welfare Department, etc.[66]

The author pointed out that on the basis of population in 1951, there should be only 92 MLAs from the upper castes but in reality they captured 254 seats. It was a dacoity on the seats of Dalits, backward classes and minorities.[67] Christophe Jaffrelot also points out that "the over-representation of the higher castes among Congress MLAs is very high and continued to rise from 1952-62, from 58 to 61 percent, where the lower castes remained very under-represented with less than one-tenth of the MLAs. The SCs accounted for one-fifth to a quarter of the Congress group at the Assembly in Lucknow. Thus the two extreme poles of the caste system were the most represented here although one should bear in mind that that large number of SC MLAs was due to reservation system. In fact, the Congress hardly bothered to promote this category of the population."[68]

There were only 194 gazetted officers from Dalits while the number from upper castes was 8500 in 1961. Earlier the British argued that Indians were not capable of becoming officers. Now the upper castes were using the same language for the Dalits. Still, the government did not fulfill the 18 percent reservation in jobs for the SCs while there were thousands of unemployed educated Dalits. This was not something new; it was happening since the attainment of independence. For example, in 1947, only two SCs were recruited in the Indian Administrative and other Allied Services.[69]

The author informed that Ramdeen Jatav, M.L.A., asked a question in the UP Assembly regarding the Dalits in police service. On July 29, 1960, the answer revealed that no I.G. and D.I.G. of police belonged to the SCs and Backward Classes but from upper castes the number was 1 and 14 respectively. 1, 2, and 12 SCs filled the posts of Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent whereas the upper castes possessed 77, 30, and 282

[66] Ibid., pp. 3-5
[67] Ibid., pp. 6-7
[68] Christophe Jaffrelot; India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, pp. 66-67
[69] Ministry of Home Affairs – GS – File No. 147/48-GS, Recommendation for Appointment of SCs- Policy followed by the Federal Public Service Commission, NAI, p. 4

respectively. In the judicial department there was no SC on the post of the Civil and Session Judge, Civil Judge, District Session Judge and Additional Session Judge while these posts were filled up by upper castes and their number was 76, 78, 48 and 7 respectively.[70]

Therefore, it was an open dacoity on the rights of Dalits and backward classes. The whole government system was designed on caste basis. On the one hand the State was claiming that they very sincerely tried to remove the untouchability and discrimination, whereas on the other hand, when the time of implementation of this policy came, they discriminated on caste lines.

Social and Religious Themes

There is a long tradition of *sants* who abjured the caste system one way or another. Kabir and Raidas were prominent among them. Kabir rejected many of the outward signs of Hinduism – its rituals, fasting, and asceticism – but more importantly, he rejected caste distinctions.[71] Raidas was also remembered for his knowledge and integrity. He gave immense importance to *Bhakti* (devotion) which could take such human to salvation. However, Ambedkar had some problems about the Raidas tradition. From the turn of the twentieth century, many untouchables in the towns began to call themselves *Bhagats*, a term which denoted lay practitioners of *Bhakti* cults, who were not ascetics of insular religious sects.[72] Raidas gained popularity among them. Therefore, we found many references of celebration of his birth-anniversaries from 1930s.[73] We need to remind ourselves, however, that Ambedkar was very suspicious of this tradition which only questioned but did not actively challenge discrimination on birth.

The religious happiness of the Dalits lies in '*Sant Dharma'* or the *Sant* tradition. Their *sants* taught them the lesson of equality, brotherhood and freedom as the basic qualities and

[70] Lalayee Singh Yadav; Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Rajnaitik Dacoity, (Political Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), Jhinjhak (Kanpur): Ashok Pustakalya, 1961, pp. 6-11
[71] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 141
[72] Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 149
[73] I have collected more than 10 pamphlets regarding celebration of Ravidas birth anniversary. These pamphlets were issued by Adi Hindu Association, Cawnpore.

values of the *Sant Dharma*. In his booklet "***Sant Prawar Raidas Sahab Jeevan Darshan,"*** Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu makes an attempt to provide a glimpse of the *Sant* tradition. This booklet was published from Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, Lucknow in 1955. The author illustrates the religious background of the late fourteenth and fifteenth century when Raidas was born. According to him, every religion was competing with another for devotees. Muslim *Moulavis* were trying to convert the low castes their religion by showing the benefits of new Muslim rule while the Sufi *sants* were making them their followers by teaching lessons of love through music and song. At the same time, the Brahmans were also trying to maintain their domination over the low castes through the illusion of devotion to God Vishnu and his incarnations. Jainism was locked behind the wall of Jain temples and *Sravagi Seths*. The idols of Parasnath and other *Digamber sants* could not be worshipped. Buddhism almost disappeared from India and Buddha was incorporated into Hinduism as an incarnation of God Vishnu by Brahmans to confuse the low castes.[74] During this period, the '*Sant Dharma'* flourished with the birth of *sants* like Namdev, Kabir, Raidas, Dadu and Guru Nanak.

Sant Raidas was born in an untouchable Chamar family of Kashi in 1399 and worked as a shoemaker with his father. But his inclination was more towards interacting with and serving the ascetics whom he idolized. His father, upset over his lack of dedication towards work got him married. He was asked to leave home to earn his own living. He started working as a shoemaker and gradually attained much success. Meanwhile, he continued to enlighten people with his thoughts on equality, freedom and brotherhood. Slowly his prayer-gatherings became quite famous and attracted lakhs of` devotees. He was a humanist who denounced casteism and communalism. He did not believe in idol worship and the Hindu practice of keeping fasts etc. Rani Jhali of Chittor and Meerabai were some of his important devotees.[75]

The booklet pointed out that the *Sant Dharma* is superior to and more sacred than the Bhakti tradition of the upper castes. The latter made a person to abandon the world and retire into mountains or forests and perform *tapasya*; only then could a person become a learned *Sant*. But the *Sant Dharma* of the low castes made householders struggle against the troubles of the world

[74] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Sant Prawar Raidas Sahab Jeevan Darshan, Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1955 (3rd revised edition published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 1996), pp. 3-4
[75] Ibid, p. 19

and live a pious life and support their brethren. It further pointed out that a person belonging to low castes could become a leader on the basis of his true knowledge. True knowledge was not paternal property of the Brahmans. Low castes could also acquire true knowledge through right and pious way of earning livelihood which is also a pre-requisite quality to being a learned and humane person. Raidas, a man of low caste origin, had all these qualities. He exposed the tyrannical and cunning rituals of the Brahmans. The author, through his booklet, tried to show the path of Raidas to the untouchable community for their social and spiritual upliftment. '*Sant Dharma'* is a real religion of the deprived community instead of hierarchical Hinduism. Their emancipation lies in the negation of Hinduism.

Lalayee Singh Yadav wrote a booklet "***Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Dharmik Dacoity***," (Religious Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State) in 1961. The author claims that "untouchables and Shudras were the victims of inhuman behavior of the caste Hindus which was perpetrated on them in the name of religion. This humiliation was supported by the Hindu religious scriptures such as Smritis, Puranas, Sutras, *Ramayana*, etc. Today, in a secular country, all citizens are equal. Despite that, in this age the caste discrimination and feeling of inferiority and superiority is encouraged in the name of religion and religious texts. This is totally against the Constitution. This is also a social crime."[76]

The author presented a history of betrayal of the original inhabitants of India by the caste Hindus. The advent of the Aryans brought miseries for Shudras. In medieval times, caste Hindus too got converted to Islam but came in the way of progress of converted Shudras by not letting the stigma of caste go. Today, despite India being an independent and secular state, castiest texts like the *Ramayana* and the *Manusmriti* are being taught in schools and colleges which are encouraging the revival of the Brahmanical social set up against Shudras.[77]

The author cites in detail verses from the *Manusmriti*, the *Ramcharitmanas*, and other famous Brahmanical scriptures regarding religious, social, political, judicial and economic position of the Shudras. He also provided some instances of caste discrimination in post-

[76] Lalayee Singh Yadav; Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Dharmik Dacoity, (Religious Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), Jhinjhak (Kanpur): Ashok Pustakalya, 1961, p. 22 (translation in mine from Hindi)
[77] Ibid., pp. 3-5

independence times. For example, Congress M.L.A. Bechan Ram and his untouchable friends were attacked by priests and *pandas* of the Vishvnath temple in Benares when they were entering the temple; another Congress leader, Pragilal Chamar, M.P., was not allowed to pay obeisance at the Badrinath temple; Central Minister Jagjivan Ram was not allowed into a Sanskrit school because his entry would have polluted all religious texts in the school, etc. It is worth taking note that these incidents occurred with high profile Dalits. If Dalit leaders were not free from caste abuses then, it could be anybody's guess as to what the common and illiterate Dalits were facing at the hands of caste Hindus. There are several reports in newspapers which exposed the exploitation of Dalits in the name of their caste and low birth.[78] Such rampant disregard for fundamental rights of the Dalits proves that the caste Hindus neither had any respect for the ethos of democracy nor did they fear the Constitution of India. It seemed as if their lives were still being regulated by the principals of Brahmanical texts.

In the end, the author hopes to create a casteless society. He wants that all caste Hindus should shun discriminatory practices against Shudras and change themselves according to the new age. They should leave religious blindness and vested interests and try to spread love which could provide vigour to national pride.[79]

This booklet shows that despite numerous atrocities on Dalits they still believed in universal love and wanted to make a casteless society where everyone would be equal and free. During the 1940s it was widely believed by the caste Hindus that the Dalit movement was anti-national because it could harm the progress of struggle for freedom by the Indian nationalists. Ironically, whereas the so-called 'nationalists' were fighting for freedom from the yoke of the British they were not ready to free the Dalits from their suffocating grip of slavery. It is this basic contradiction in the 'national' struggle for independence that actually hampered true freedom of

[78] AICC Papers, File No. CPD-2, CPD-6/1947-48; File No. CPD-2, CPD-6/1947-48; File No. G-19 (KWI)/1946-48, NMML; Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 74/124/52, Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 326-P/48; Ministry of Home Affairs – Police – File No. 8/3/48; Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 51/69/49; Ministry of States – Political – File No. Prog., Nos., 3 (81)-P/50, , NAI

[79] Lalayee Singh Yadav; Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Dharmik Dacoity, (Religious Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), Jhinjhak (Kanpur): Ashok Pustakalya, 1961, p. 22

the people of India. Jagjivan Ram also expressed his apprehensions that if atrocities on Dalits continued then this could "lead to an explosive situation in the whole country."[80]

Another booklet "***Bharat Mein Samajik Vishmata Kyoun?"***(Why is social inequality in India?) by Dr. Yogendra Sen published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 1970, is a narration of social events of the Vedic period when the Varna system came into existence. The author avers that the Brahman became superior because of his Knowledge. Other people who provided security to him became Kshatriya; and those who rendered wealth to Brahman became Vaishya while those who supplied menial services to him became Shudras. Thus, with the institution of the Varna order further castes and sub-castes came into existence. The author argues that this social hierarchical order, designed by Brahmans with scriptural support, is illogical and irrational. Hindu religion is a tyrannical instrument to serve the economic interests of the rich in society.[81] An analysis of history by foreign scholars reveals that the Dravidians came to India as early as 3500 B.C. The Aryan kings, equipped with superior weapons and knowledge, defeated them.[82] The Aryans invented the Varna system to enslave the non-Aryans and developed religious institutions to accumulate wealth. To overcome it, a single culture, i.e. 'Human Culture', is required. The culture of humanity will eliminate caste hierarchies, class and gender inequalities, and rituals for collecting wealth. Human culture will thus be a socialist culture.

The author claims that Hinduism is a religion to create discrimination among human beings. It is interesting that the author did not take the existence of the caste system as an obstacle in the progress of Indian society. He provides an alternative caste system which would be based on humanity. To establish a classless as well as casteless society, we should negate the Vedas, the Shastras, and other religious scriptures, which are useless in the modern age. His discourse is against both capitalism and socialism. Capitalists always look for their profits and they never pay any attention to Dalits. Congress's socialism is based on the denial of Dalit interests and acceptance of upper castes and rich people. He gave an example of Jawaharlal

[80] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 74/124/52, All India Harijan legislators and Workers' Convention in Nagpur on 1/11/52-Resolution adopted therein, NAI, p. 16
[81] Dr. Yogendra Sen; Bharat Mein Samajik Vishmata Kyoun?' Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow, 1970 (4th revised edition, 1994), pp. 8-9
[82] Ibid; p. 14

Nehru's birthday celebration on 14 November, 1970. That day some Dalit children were stopped from entering the house of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, while rich and upper caste people were allowed in without any objection. This incident might seem simple yet it renders bare the hollowness of the discourse of egalitarian and socialist society.

Biographies of Dalit Leaders

Nandini Gooptu pointed out that the Adi Hinduism evolved against a background of new social and political developments which affected the untouchables from the 1920s. Swami Acchutanand was the first among prominent Dalit leaders in north India.[83] He was among those *prominent Dalit leaders whose lives attained legendary status in the narratives of the Dalit movement*. After independence, there was a great demand among the Dalit readership to know about their leaders.[84] Chandrika Prasad Jigayasu wrote and published the biography of Swami Acchutanand in 1960. Guru Prasad Madan also wrote a biography of Acchutanand entitled '*Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva*' (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works) in 1969, at Allahabad but could not publish it owing to economic problems. This booklet is available in his personal library.

Swami Acchutanand's biography was written by Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu in 1960 entitled '***Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar.'*** Its first edition is not available. [85] The second edition was published by Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow, in 1968. It can be taken as a turning point in terms of revival of the Adi Hindu theory which aimed at bringing back the rule of the original inhabitants of India instead of Caste Hindus and the Congress.

Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' who belonged to a respectable Jatia (Jatav) community started the Adi Hindu movement in Delhi in 1922. It is noteworthy that the Jatavs of Agra did not want any association with the Adi Hindu movement because it was harmful to their assertion

[83]Nandini Gooptu; The Politics of Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 153
[84] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am
[85] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Shri 108 Swami Acchutanandji 'Harihar', Lucknow: Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1960

of Kshatriya status.[86] However, Swami Acchutanand demanded the '*Mulki Haque*' (national rights) from the British government because untouchables were the real claimants of India being the original inhabitants of this land. He tried to provide a pan-Indian base to the Adi Hindu movement. Therefore, he invited Ambedkar in 1928 in the meeting of the Adi Hindu movement in Lucknow. Ambedkar was enthralled by the services of Swami Acchutanand in northern India and called him '*Vishva Vijayee Shri 108 Swami Acchutanand'*.[87] Ambedkar addressed him as '*Vishva Vijayee'* because of his vast knowledge and limitless enterprise for the cause of the Depressed Classes.

The second part of this booklet deals with selected speeches and writings of Swami Acchutanand. He travelled throughout India to spread awareness among the Depressed Classes through the print media and his speeches. He delivered his last speech in Gwalior in 1933 despite acute weakness.

Swami Acchutanand started a literary campaign against Hinduism. He has written more than 15 booklets on the Adi Hindu theory and on issues related to the Depressed Classes. He also started '*Acchut*' magazine in 1923 and '*Adi Hindu*' newspaper in 1925 from Delhi and Kanpur respectively. He was the first untouchable who made a vigorous call for *Swaraj* from Hinduism and from British government in north India. This biography exposed the ingenious politics of the Arya Samaj and declared that its *Shuddhi* initiative was a part of their strategy to render perpetual the domination of Brahmans in the Indian social order. This biographical booklet is a full account of the Adi Hindu movement which is considered a major development in Dalit history in the early decades of twentieth century.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was another leader who wielded great importance in UP. He was born in the Central Provinces but he spearheaded a national movement of the Dalits. C.P. Jigyasu wrote the biography of Ambedkar in 1961. His booklet '***Baba Saheb Ka Jivan Sangharsh***'[88] (The Life Struggle of Baba Saheb) was the first in the Hindi public sphere after independence.

[86] Owen M. Lynch; The Politics of Untouchability: Social Change in a City of India, New York and London: Columbia University Press , 1969, p. 81
[87] The title of "*Shri 108*" had a great significance among the learned people of society. It was awarded only to a great *sant* who has the knowledge of the universe and of real truth.
[88] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Baba Saheb Ka Jivan Sangharsh, Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1961

The author presented the life sketch of Ambedkar in a lucid language so that illiterate Dalits could understand the ideas of Baba Saheb. This booklet proved crucial in instilling a critical and subversive consciousness among the Dalits. Ambedkar's life became a mission for them. After reading this booklet, many Dalits became writers and they spread the ideas of Ambedkar among other Dalits.[89]

While reading Ambedkar's biography many Dalits could actually identity themselves with him. Despite that there still existed a vast population of the Dalits who know next to nothing about Ambedkar. It is because of this that many a Dalit youth began writing in order to remove this ignorance. Ram Sajivan was one of them who penned the life sketch of Ambedkar in a small booklet called '***Bhagwan Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar***' (God Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar) which was published from Allahabad in 1973. He found the Government responsible for the prevailing ignorance regarding the father of the Indian Constitution. He says that the Education Department consciously presented the life sketch of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and other Congress and caste Hindus leaders in the school books. They did not provide any information about Ambedkar. Therefore, it is the duty of every Dalit to spread the teaching of Ambedkar among Dalits.

When Ambedkar was born the door of education was closed for him by the so-called learned caste Hindus. They compelled low castes to take up dirty and unclean work as their 'traditional' professions. If we start doing a true appraisal of Ambedkar then he emerges a super-human, literally a god. Caste Hindus forget his value and achievements for the cause of the nation and the common mass of humanity. The author presented a speech of Ambedkar which he delivered in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 in response to Jayakar's proposal. He declared that a united India is in favour of everyone whether it is the Congress or the Muslim League. If anybody were to read his speech, then nobody could say that Ambedkar was the leader of Dalits alone. In a real sense, he was the leader of all Indian citizens. The author explained that the impulse behind writing this booklet was to create awareness among the Dalits regarding

[89] Personal interviews with Guru Prasad Madan (age 65), Allahabad on February 19, 2008 at 9.30 am; Avinash Kumar (age 53) grandson of Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu on 25 February, 2008 at 4.00 pm.; A.R. Akella, (age 60) Dalit writer and publisher, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00 pm.

Ambedkar. We find that Ambedkar's example was so empowering to ordinary Dalits that he was elevated to a divine status. He himself would have found it irrational.

Dalit Heroes: Re-construction of Dalit History

Dalit intellectuals claimed that their history had been destroyed by the Aryans and they were literally reduced to the status of slaves. In order to reconstruct this lost history they started imagining a glorious past. They started seeking out Dalit heroes, both mythical and historical, who had remained unsung and overlooked due to upper caste conspiracies.[90] They cited references from the Brahmanical scriptures and other texts. They developed a sense of 'history' for the progress of their community. In this process of reconstruction of their history, these Dalit intellectuals created their own heroes who could inspire the Dalits to start a movement for liberation from Brahmanism. Shambook, Eklavya, Ravidas, Kabir, Mayanand, Jhalkaribai, Udadevi etc. were their prominent heroes. These heroes remained at the fore-front of their print culture.

Ravidas was a *Sant* of *Bhakti* period. He was known for his wisdom and attitude of welfare for all. The Brahmans of Kashi were jealous of him because of his popularity. But he overcame their hostility with his wisdom and true Bhakti. He was regarded as an emancipator of the Dalits. The Dalits used his teachings as their beacon.

Badloo Ram Sonkar wrote a booklet entitled '***Maha Prabhu Ravidas Ka Chamatkar***' (Wonders of Great God Ravidas) in 1949. The author claimed that he wrote this booklet as a historical duty and for the welfare of eleven crore untouchables. He averred that despite our country being free today there is ever the more need for love between human beings. As Ravidas propagated the gospel of love it is necessary that everybody accepts his teachings.

Aaja mere Ravidas Acchuton ke sitare,
Daliton pe pari bheed hai to tu hi ubare.
Fariyad acchuton ki sunta hai na koi,
Ghut ghut kar mare jate hai din rat bichare.

[90] Badri Narayan; The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950-Present, New Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 2011, p. 83

Aazad huva desh gai par na tabahi,[91]

> The star of untouchables, Ravidas, come; Dalits are in trouble, only you can save them/ there is no one who listens to the appeals of untouchables; these miserable ones are dying a suffocating death everyday/ Independence came but there is no end to destruction/[92]

Swami Bhagat Singh wrote and published a booklet "*Shri Ravidas Kirtan Ki Jai*" from Kanpur in 1952. Interestingly, the booklet claimed that the Dalits were unfortunate in not having attained freedom which had remained on paper only. In real sense, Brahmanical rule was governing the country. In this situation, they did not ask help from the so-called elected Prime-Minister or Chief Minister of UP, rather they called their God, Ravidas, for their emancipation. On the other hand, it shows that Dalits did not believe in joint electorate. It was confirmed when some Dalit leaders openly demanded separate electorates.[93]

The author claimed himself as an 'Adi Niwasi' (original inhabitant) on the front page of the booklet. It is during this time that the theory of the original inhabitant was gaining currency. The booklet also contained *Bhajans* like Ravidas *Aarti* (prayer), *Ravidas Mahima* (greatness), *Ravidas sharan* (shelter) etc. These are related to the religious life of the Dalits. In them, the names of Ravidas' followers, including Meera, were given.[94] According to the author the teachings of Ravidas have been given for the development of the Dalits. It is only when the Dalits repose faith in Ravidas instead of Brahmanism that they could begin their march on the path of progress.

There were many booklets which gave a short biographical sketch of Ravidas. '***Shri Satya Ravidas Bhagwan ka Janmotsav***'(Birth Anniversary of True God Ravidas) was written by Mahrishi Ramdasjee Shastrapathi. This booklet exhorted the Dalits to listen to the story of Ravidas and read works on his life. They should celebrate his birthday with enthusiasm and

[91] Swami Bhagat Singh; Shri Ravidas Kirtan Ki Jai, Kanpur, 1952, pp. 3-4
[92] Translation is mine from Hindi
[93] Ministry of Home Affairs – RPS – File No. 20/4/54, SCs-Hunger Strike since 24/3/54 for their 16 requirements (demands) at Rajghat, New Delhi, NAI, p. 4
[94] Swami Bhagat Singh; Shri Ravidas Kirtan Ki Jai, Kanpur, 1952, pp. 2-16

pride.[95] The same author also wrote another booklet titled '***Shri Ravidas Bhagwan Ki Prabhuta***' (Greatness of God Ravidas). This booklet was printed at Lucknow in 1953. It included *kirtans*, (religious choirs) that is, prayers regarding teaching and greatness of Ravidas.[96]

In the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, with the development of nationalism, there was a concerted effort on the part of both political and cultural leaders to use historical figures, movements and symbols derived from the historical records of India as a means of relating the struggle against the British to Indian past. In western India, the efforts of B.G. Tilak and his followers revived the interests of Maharashtraians in Sivaji. V.D. Savarkar's *First War of Indian Independence* viewed what the British historians call the Indian Mutiny of 1857 as the first Indian struggle for freedom against the British. All these attempts could be seen as a part of a process by which Indians could view their own history, identify with it and use it in the development not only of political nationalism but to define their own identity.[97] Like the mainstream narratives of history, Dalits also imagined their national heroes especially after the independence and they asked for their proper place in the politics and distribution of resources because they had also fought the war of Indian independence. They imagined their national heroes and freedom fighters, who in their perception, played a greater role to free and develop the nation, than other conventional heroes of the nationalist movement.[98] Promoting alternative accounts of role of Dalits in the freedom struggle, their literature portrays itself as the real and comprehensive truth. It catalogues their enormous sacrifices and enumerates the many occasions on which Dalits rose in defence of the nation.[99] ***"Virangana Jhalkaribai"*** (Brave Jhalkaribai), written by Bhavani Shankar Vishard, is an attempt to bring out the contribution of Dalit heroes in the War of 1857. This booklet was published by Nathu Ram Arya from Jhansi in 1964 but very soon it went out of print. Later, it was reprinted by A.R. Akella from Anand Sahitya Sadan,

[95] Mahrishi Ramdasjee Shastrapathi; Shri Satya Ravidas Bhagwan ka Janmotsav, Kashi, 1952 (1st edition 1947), p. 16
[96] Mahrishi Ramdasjee Shastrapathi; Shri Ravidas Bhagwan Ki Prabhuta, Lucknow, 1953
[97] Bernard S. Cohn; An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 228
[98] Badri Narayan; "National Past and Political Past", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 31, July 31, 2004, p. 3534
[99] Charu Gupta; "Dalit 'Viranganas' and Reinvention of 1857", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 19, May 12-18, 2007, p. 1739

Aligarh, in 1988. This booklet pointed out that the women from the Depressed Classes made remarkable contributions in the War of 1857 against the colonial rule.

Jhalkaribai (a friend of Rani Laxmibai) was born in 1830 in Jhansi. She belonged to the Kori community. The economic condition of her parents was deplorable. Therefore, she could not obtain any education. Right from her childhood, Jhalkari was playful, clever, and competent. Later on she turned into a beautiful woman with a well-built physique and a smiling face. She resembled Rani Laxmibai. The only conspicuous difference between them was their complexion. This is confirmed by the fact that when Jhalkari went to General Rose dressed like a queen, he was confused. According to Dr. Vrindavan Lal Verma, writer of famous novel "*Rani Laxmibai*" in 1950, General Rose said, "How handsome though dark and terrible."[100]

Jhalkari met Rani Laxmibai at a royal event. The Rani was impressed by her physique. From the next day, Jhalkari started coming to the chamber of the Rani. The Rani used to impart lessons to her in archery, wrestling, and sword-play in her chamber and, thereafter, they practiced horse riding and shooting, etc. Within a short period, Jhalkari learnt all these from the queen and then she used to practice these martial arts herself.

On 23 March 1858, General Rose attacked Jhansi. British forces attacked the fort from all sides. Jhalkari and her husband, Puran, were defending the northern gate. When some British soldiers tried to get into the fort she took her gun and encouraged her female soldiers saying that: "W should stop the British at the cost of our life. Take your guns and *lathis*, and strike them on their heads. Not a single soldier of the enemy camp should return alive. Today you have the opportunity to prove that every woman of Bundelkhand is chivalrous to defend herself and her land."[101]

After the martyrdoms of many soldiers, her main aim was to save the queen from being taken a captive. The queen of Jhansi herself was fighting bravely and killing the enemies in hundreds. However, on seeing innumerable dead bodies of her soldiers and receiving news of the

[100] Bhavani Shankar Vishard; Virangana Jhalkaribai, Jhansi: 1964, reprinted by Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh, 1988, p. 10
[101] Ibid; pp. 42-43 (translation mine from Hindi)

death of Khudabaksh, Motibai, Sundar, Gulam Gaus her heart started bleeding. She could not restrain her composure and fearing imminent capture she contemplated suicide. Then, Nana Bhopatkar, an army commander, advised her to leave Jhansi and continue leading the revolutionary movement against the British. She left Jhansi while Jhalkari and Puran were actively facing the enemy.

Jhalkari had an idea. She disguised herself as the queen of Jhansi, and reached the camp of General Rose to confuse him. By then the real Rani Laxmibai would find sufficient time to cover the required distance from where she could not be captured. She succeeded in her plan and General Rose was impressed with her bravery and released her. Thus, Jhalkaribai successfully protected the glory of Jhansi and the spirit of Bundelkhand.[102]

Jhalkaribai struggled against British rule to save Rani Laxmibai and Jhansi though the latter belonged to the upper caste. It is striking that Jhalkari became the victim of Brahmanical discrimination when she mistakenly fired a bullet on a cow's leg. Nevertheless, she never took any step against caste discrimination and social boycott, rather she requested Rani Laxmibai to intervene in the matter. Lack of education and social awareness made her unable to realise caste discrimination. Therefore, she accepted the discriminatory Hindu social order as her destiny. Consequently, she accepted a subordinate position under Rani Laxmibai and fought against her enemy.

This narrative, however, builds up an alternative history in which Dalits are at the centre. The Dalits, through the narratives of the 1857 revolution, not only tried to establish their own heroes, but also tried to dethrone the existing high caste heroes from the mainstream narratives. In their narrative, they presented the high castes as traitors and collaborating with the British. Through this narrative, they also wanted to prove that these traitors of the nation, who collaborated with the British now appear as the most nationalist of communities. Charu Gupta argues that new Dalit histories argue that they had nothing much to lose in pre-British times, as their condition had been miserable even then. So it was actually Dalits who fought for independence in 1857, while the upper caste Hindus and Indian rulers only fought to restore their

[102] Ibid; pp. 54-61

rule.[103] Jhalkari and her husband, Puran became a role model of bravery, while the top army commanders of Jhansi surrendered to the British for personal benefits. Rani Laxmibai also left Jhansi at the crucial time when it needed a strong leader. A low caste woman, Jhalkari, in the guise of Rani Laxmibai successfully confused the British army so that the queen could be shifted to a safer place. The author claimed that Rani Laxmibai could leave Jhansi only because of the efforts of Jhalkaribai.

Dalit intellectuals explained the benefits of the unity in the *'preface'* of their booklets and sometimes they dedicated their booklets to the unity among various castes. They tried to demonstrate the dangerous results caused by disunity among the low castes. The booklet '***Eklavya Natak***' (Eklavya Play) is one of the examples of the caste differences between the Eklavya and Krishna. Both belonged to the Shudra Varna but because of fighting with each other they ended up ruining the Nishad community itself. Their differences were the causes of their downfall and ultimately the Aryan Brahmans benefited. It is important to note here that the author believed Krishna to be a Shudra who was misguided by the Aryan Brahmans to fight against the original inhabitants of India. However, the main theme of this play is the discriminatory behaviour of the Aryans towards Eklavya and his Nishad community.

Ram Avtar Pal and Lalayee Singh Yadav wrote a historical play called "***Eklavya Natak***". It was published from Samaj Sewa Press, Lucknow in 1963.[104] Heerandhanush, the king of Shrangverpur, blames his ancestors for allowing the Aryans to settle down on their land. Under their Varna order, they labeled the aboriginals as untouchables and posed a threat to their existence. He was further disturbed with his son Abhay's decision to get trained under an Aryan, Rishi Dronacharaya. On reaching Dronacharaya's *ashram* (hermitage), Abhay was humiliated and thrown out. However, this could not stop him from practicing before Drona's idol and becoming the best archer. Seen Arjun's supremacy threatened, Dronacharaya cunningly asked for Abhay's right hand thumb as *Guru Dakshina*, and named him Eklavya thereafter.[105] He returned and won many battles but lost against the Yadavs, after which he never went back to his

[103] Charu Gupta; "Dalit 'Viranganas' and Reinvention of 1857", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 19, May 12-18, 2007, p. 1740
[104] The fifth revised edition published from Samaj Sewa Press, Lucknow in 1990
[105] Ram Avtar Pal & Lalayee Singh Yadav; Eklavya (Natak) Lucknow: Samaj Sewa Press, 1963, p. 53

kingdom. He passed his days in a jungle and survived on snatching food from passersby. One day mistakenly he shot Krishna with his arrow and apologized before him, admitting his true identity. Krishna, who belonged to Shudra Varna, also apologized to Eklavya because it was Krishna who was responsible for the miserable conditions of Eklavya and his community.[106] The play portrays the unjust aspects of the Aryan superiority. The author warned Dalits not to repeat the mistakes of Eklavya. They have to destroy the tyrannical Aryans who still rule.

This play portrayed Eklavya as a hero of the Depressed Classes. He had the courage to defeat the Aryans but he failed to understand the treachery and cunning politics of the Aryan Brahmans. This play also pointed out the differences among the original inhabitants, who are still fighting against each other instead of getting united and struggling against the oppressive rule of the Aryan community. Krishna belonged to the Yadav dynasty and was, therefore, a Shudra and original inhabitant of India. But he and his brother, Balaram, attacked Eklavya.

Translated Works of Dalit Leaders in Hindi

In the 1940s, especially after the formation of the All India Scheduled Castes' Federation in 1942, the Dalit movement gained momentum and some unity. Ambedkar, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and other Dalit intellectuals emerged as national leaders. They gave expression to their ideas in books. Among the educated Dalits in UP, the majority of people knew only Hindi language. In order to inspire the Dalits some publishers translated the works of their leaders. After 1950s, Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow and Ashok Pustakalaya, Kanpur and other publication centers presented the works of Jotirao Phule, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and other intellectuals' writings in the form of booklets.

The translated works in Hindi were quite popular among the Dalit readers. The popularity could be gauged from the fact that Ambedkar's '*Who were the Shudras?*' was first published in 1946 and its eleventh edition came out in 2003. Interestingly, the translator of this book was Ambedkar's follower, a Dalit. No name was mentioned. Ambedkar's '*The Untouchables*' was translated by Bhadant Anand Koshalyayan. It was first published in 1949 and

[106] Ibid, p. 80

its seventh edition came in 2006. Another work of Ambedkar 'Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables' was translated by Khemchand 'Sogat', M.L.A. in 1966 and it sixth edition was published in 2005. Gandhi had responded to Ambedkar's 'Annihilation of Caste' and had argued in favour of the Varna system which the latter countered. This work was translated into Hindi by Sundar Lal Sagar and C.P. Jigyasu in 1966 and its eighth edition was published in 2005. Ambedkar's famous book '*What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*' was translated by Shrivardhan in 1968 and its sixth edition came in 2003. Another work of Ambedkar was published in Hindi under the caption of '*Gandhivad kee Mimansa*' in 1966. It was translated by Shrivardhan and its fourth edication came in 1995. These books in Hindi were published by the Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan in Lucknow.

Some works of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker were also published in Hindi. His famous work '*A Pen Portrait, Philosophy, Social Reform and Social Revolution*' was translated by Dayaram Jain in 1973 from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan in Lucknow. It third edition came in 1997. '*The Ramayana – A True Reading*' by Naicker was translated into Hindi by S. Murti from Cultural Publishers in Lacknow. Its fifth edition came in 1995 but there is no information regarding its first edition. Jotirao Phule's '*Gulamgiri*' was translated to Hindi by S. Murti. There is no information regarding its first edition but its third edition was published from Cultural Publishers in Lucknow in 1994.

Historical Themes

Dalit writers were very conscious about their primary task. Despite getting so-called political independence Dalits were still religiously slaves of Brahmanism. The *Satya Narayan Katha* (the story of Satya Narayan) has a very peculiar place in their life. Brahmans used to preach that it was 'mandatory' for every household to make arrangement for the recitation of the *Katha*. Otherwise, their *Parlok* (next world) would be badly affected. Swami Mangalanandji Jigyasu and Mahashya Bhikhulal warned Dalits about the conspiracy of Brahmans. Brahmans were reciting the *Leelawati Katha* (the story of Leelawati) in the name of the *Satya Narayan Katha* to Dalits. There was as such no story of Satya Narayan for Dalits. The story of their brave ancestors was the real *Satya Narayan Katha* for them. But the Brahmans deliberately created myths to confuse

Dalits and to destroy their original history. To spread awareness regarding Brahmans' conspiracy, Swami Mangalanandji Jigyasu and Mahashya Bhikhulal wrote a booklet entitled **'*Acchut Prakashavali*'.** This booklet was edited by Babu Chandi Lal B.A. It was published by Swami Guljardasji, Bhajnik Panchayati Ravidas Mandir, Ayodhya in Faizabad district in 1953. Through this booklet, the authors say that the main reason behind their writing this booklet was to recite the original story of Satya Narayan which the Brahmans had hidden from them.

The first Bhajan '*Acchut Kavitavali*' tells untouchables that their drudgery begins precisely from the moment when they leave formal education. That is the moment, he proceeds to argue, when the traitors (i.e. the Aryan Brahmans) became the happiest because now they could fool the untouchables before the whole world. Interestingly though, he invokes Guru Ravidas as one who relieves the untouchables of their grief., whom he calls upon to have faith and to bear in mind before venturing upon any important venture that the literate upper classes were upper castes.[107] This attempted resolution of a problem that essentially originates from lack of literacy through recourse to the invocation of a *Sant* is highly problematic howsoever sympathetic to the cause of equality Ravidas might actually have been.

The tract laments that Dalits still remained subjugated even after Indian independence from British rule. Education is the primary need for the progress and welfare of any community. But even in independent India, education was not free from caste discrimination.[108] The laws of the *Manusmriti* were still followed in daily life to maintain the domination of the upper castes over the low castes. It is important to note here that Guru Ravidas is accorded more respect and importance than God itself. This reflects that there was a tendency towards the *Sant* tradition which existed in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. However, this invocation also significantly reconstituted the *Sants*. For instance, almost all the *Sants* or leaders that these intellectuals invoked or followed, be it Ravidas or Acchutanand, were all worldly successful men. In other words, for the leaders of the emerging Dalit public sphere that was essentially

[107] Swami Mangalanandji Jigyasu & Mahashya Bhikhulal; Acchut Prakashavali, Ayodhya: Swami Guljardasji, Bhajnik Panchayati Ravidas Mandir, 1953, p. 3
[108] Ministry of Home Affairs – Public – File No. 69/3/53, NAI & Dr. Anand Koshalyayan; Manusmriti Jalai Gai Kyo? (Why Manusmriti was burned?), Lucknow: Cultural Publishers, 1981, pp. 4-12

addressing a constituency consisting chiefly poor and illiterate men and women, it was a conscious choice to introduce icons whose life combined material and academic excellence.

Acchuton hosh me aavo jagane tum ko aaya hu,
Jo bhoola rah tha tumhara batane tum ko aaya hu.
Asli raj ke malik tumhi to pahle hote the,
Tumhari veerata ko phir batane aaj aaya hu.[109]

I have come to remind you, the untouchables, the way which they have forgotten/ you were the real king of the kingdom [India], I have to come to tell your bravery/[110]

'*Shri Acchut Vanshavali*' is another *Bhajan* in this booklet which invokes a glorious history. The author tells untouchables that he has come to awaken their memories and to show them the path of liberation. He tells them that you were the real owners of this land. Your [ancestors were] mighty kings [who] had thriving kingdoms. They defeated their enemies [the Aryans]. You were full of wealth; therefore, I have come to remind your glorious past. Awake and save your sinking boat of life. Now realize your power and become the real owners of this land.[111]

Another *Bhajan*, '*Stri –Shiksha*' (women education) of this booklet focuses on women's education. He says that mothers and sisters, who consider '*Pativarta Dharma*' (fidelity to husband) as their real jewel, are goddesses. Those who are the true followers of their husbands are to be worshipped. The authors advise the women to worship their husbands who are their 'living gods' rather than worshipping the stones (lifeless idols). O Mothers and sisters, listen, I am awakening you from the deep sleep of ignorance, he said. [112] It is obvious that the proposal of replacing the gods cast in stone by the living husbands was certainly not a promising initiative from the perspective of gender justice. More importantly, it helps to clarify that the emerging notion of Dalit print was very deeply patriarchal in its constitutive structure, something that it

[109] Swami Mangalanandji Jigyasu & Mahashya Bhikhulal; Acchut Prakashavali, Ayodhya: Swami Guljardasji, Bhajnik Panchayati Ravidas Mandir, 1953, p. 5
[110] Translation mine from Hindi
[111] Swami Mangalanandji Jigyasu & Mahashya Bhikhulal; Acchut Prakashavali, Ayodhya: Swami Guljardasji, Bhajnik Panchayati Ravidas Mandir, 1953, p. 5
[112] Ibid., p. 7

clearly shared with the very upper caste ideology that it had been seeking to oppose. However, the authors also instructed Dalit women and girls that without education, they could not get anything in the world. It is a reflection of Brahmanical cultural hegemony, which still pervaded the cultural world of the low castes. Nevertheless, the authors did make the point that women can play a vital role in the movement for liberation of the deprived sections of the society.

'***Aryon Ka Naitik Pol Prakash***' (Disclosing the Moral Secrets of the Aryans) was written by Dharmanand Ubhayankar. The author contends that the Aryans arrived in India in search of pastoral fields. Finding the climate suitable, they decided to settle here and in order to do that they indulged in malpractices. They thought that if they married their fair-skinned girls to dark-complexioned kings of India then, ultimately, the kings would protect them. It would also ensure the transference of indigenous intellectual wealth to the repository of knowledge of the Aryans. Therefore, they married their girls to the original inhabitants of India. For example, Hemanchal's daughter Parwati was married to Shiva, Brahma's daughter was married to Mahishasur. After some time, the Aryans adopted a new tactic to divide the Adi Niwasis. The Aryans would take one of their girls to the court of a native King and misinform him saying that another king was forcing them to marry their girl to him. They would play with such wily schemes with many other Kings because of which all of them would find themselves competing with one another for one Aryan girl. Eventually they would end up fighting each other. Aryans benefited from such an arrangement because the newly forged relationship with the native king ensured their security while at the same time it kept the natives divided because of the resultant enmity. Thus, Aryans started flooding India in large numbers and began spreading anarchy. Later on, because of such wily practices of the Aryans, the original inhabitants lost their kingdoms and were subsequently reduced to being slaves of the Aryans.[113]

According to this booklet, Manu was the first king of the Aryans. The *Manusmriti* was their political text. According to the *Manusmriti*, four aims were prominent for Aryans: first, to make India a poor country; second, to make Tibet akin to a heaven[114]; third, to deprive women and Shudras of education; and finally, to make Adi Niwasis their perpetual slaves. Further, the

[113] Dharmanand Ubhayankar; Aryon Ka Naitik Pol Prakash, Kanpur: Ashok Pustakalya, 1961, pp. 3-5
[114] According to the author, Tibet was the homeland of the Aryans.

author points out that there was no difference between Arya Samaj and Sanatan (conservative) religion. Both are the same; they adapted according to situations. They built temples to prove that this country was their property only and not of Adi Niwasis or Mulsims because both religious traditions did not accept the temple or idol worship. The real god of the Adi Niwasis is omnipotent, unnamable and indefinable. Pali, their native language, was destroyed by the Aryans. Despite such rampage through the history of Adi Niwasis, there still exist monumental evidences like Garhis (broken palaces) of the Adi Niwasi kings or inscriptions on stones. The writer laments that such has been the extent of historical injustice meted out to the Adi Niwasis that now they are named variously as Shudras, Acchut, Harijan, Dalit, SCs, Backward Castes, Bahujan, Girijan, etc.[115]

The author highlights the conspiracy to erase the name of Dalit intellectuals from the history of India. Citing one such incident, he says that in UP, the name of the father of Indian Constitution has been removed from the intermediate history text-books. Instead of Ambedkar, one Mr. Om Prakash Kela is mentioned as the 'writer' of the Constitution. Critiquing the sinister politics of historiography, he asks as to why Adi Niwasis are not mentioned in any of the history books nor are their books taught in the schools? Were there no intellectuals among them?[116]

This notion of a racial difference was rejected by Ambedkar. It is important to point out that there are critical intra-Dalit ideological differences. Despite this, Ambedkar remained an iconic figure for all. At the same time, Dalit writers were also impressed by Swami Acchutanand who believed in racial differences. Therefore, this booklet was close to the ideology of Swami Acchutanand.

This booklet convincingly tries to bust this conspiracy of the Aryans against the original inhabitants of India. They even used their womenfolk to realize their mean aims. From beggars to rulers they covered this distance by dint of their wily treachery. At one time they begged for *Bhiksha* (alms) but, very shortly, they succeeded in subjugating the natives. Unfortunately, the Adi Niwasis could not understand their mean motives. Therefore, they were systematically

[115] Ibid., pp. 6-17
[116] Ibid., p. 5

reduced to slavery. To perpetuate this cult of slavery the Arayans scribed the political and religious texts in such a way as to destroy the history of the Adi Niwasis. The question of temple entry remained a prominent aspect of the Congress' Harijan movement but it became clear that Dalits never believed in the temples or idol worship; rather, it was a construction of the Aryans to perpetuate their regime. Finally, the removal of Ambedkar's name as the father of constitution from the text-books is a great betrayal by Caste Hindus of not only the Dalit history but also of the true nationalist spirit that some of the leaders espoused during the struggle for political independence. Such activities forced Dalits to become suspicious of the nationalist discourse pertaining to 'independence' and to continue with their struggle for liberation against the caste Hindus. It confirms that the freedom of the Dalits it yet to be.

The next booklet contains some short stories and is called *'**Adi Vansha Katha**'* (the Story of Original Lineage). It is written by Dr. Angane Lal and published from Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow in 1968. He acquired a Ph.D. degree in Ancient History from University of Lucknow. Later he was appointed Vice Chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Awadh University. These stories were inspired by the "*Satya Narayan Katha"* which was popularly recited among Hindu communities. But when any low caste Hindu wanted to listen to the "*Satya Narayan Katha*" then the priest instead of reciting it at his home, recited it away from his home and locality because his locality is polluted.[117] The author invented and constructed these new *Kathas* (stories) by using themes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and other Brahmanical literature to remove the sense of pollution and inferiority among the low castes. The booklet pointed out that the history of a community is the greatest source of inspiration to its members for progress and happiness. The original inhabitants of India, dubbed as Shudras, have a glorious history from ancient to modern times. Shambook, a contemporary of Rama, excelled all Brahmin seers in spirituality. Eklavya was superior to Arjun in archery. Ravidas, a medieval *Sant*, exposed the purity of Brahmans through his miracles. In modern times, Ambedkar stands at the apex in terms of leadership and guidance to the majority of Indian population. Shambook was killed in a conspiracy by Rama.[118] Eklavya's thumb was amputated due to Dronacharaya's treachery and

[117] Personal interview with Prof. Angane Lal, Dalit writer, Ajuha Bazar, Koushambi, on 8 June, 2006 at 10.00 am.
[118] Dr. Angane Lal; Adi Vansha Katha, Lucknow: Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, 1968, (13th revised edition, 2005), p. 19

envy. Such is the history of greatness and deprivation of outcastes in India. For understanding history, one needs an enlightenment that we find only in Buddhism.

Conclusion

India attained independence on 15 August, 1947. But Dalits were doubtful about their real independence. Even the Congress 'Harijan' leader Jagjivan Ram was not sure of freedom of Dalits from the tyrant rule of caste Hindus. After independence, their doubts turned into certainty. A long series of atrocities on Dalits became routine development in 'free India'. The Congress, which was pledged to *Acchutodhar,* suffered from indiscipline and many Congress local leaders apprehended the scourge quite early. The Dalits were not given proper and just representation in the government sector. Therefore, the feelings of dissatisfaction began taking roots in their minds and their dissent came through their writings. Their print culture proliferated when a number of publishing houses were established both in villages as well as in cities.

Although the theory of the Aryan invasion lost its charm in academia but it still has a warm welcome and relevance among Dalit writers who believed in the theory of original inhabitants of India led down by Acchutanand. Now, Dalit print culture took a new turn. The theory of the original inhabitants of India got a new momentum. It has become a major characteristic of Dalit print culture. Acchutanand started his movement for liberation of Dalits. Now Dalit intellectuals inspired with his teachings and intensified the movement. To achieve their aim, they re-constructed the history of their own heroes to instill the feeling of self-respect and encouraged the common Dalits for their struggle in the so-called free India. To establish an egalitarian society they have given an immense importance to the *Sant Dharma* and criticized hierarchical Brahmanical order.

Chapter 5

A Comparative Study of Mainstream Hindi and Dalit Print Culture

From the second half of the nineteenth century, quite a few writers, including Bhartendu Harischandra, started writing in the *Khari Boli* (Hindi). At the initial stage, Hindi was used in prose while *Braj* was the language of poetry. In the early twentieth century, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi initiated the process of standardizing the Hindi language. Hindi was gradually established as a standard language for prose and poetry in course of the twentieth century. Francesca Orsini examined the evolution and development of the Hindi public sphere in the inter-war period. She shows how from the early twentieth century all aspects of literature and society were exposed to public discussion in the pages of journals. Questions of style, taste, criticism, and popularity were invariably related to the 'welfare of the people' or *Lokhit*. All literate people could voice their opinion in one journal or another and make his or her voice public. Invested with a new freedom and sense of purpose their writings directly confronted 'the public'.[1]

Hindi literature in the twentieth century straddled two analytically distinct public spheres. One belonged to the mainstream Hindi writers and the other was created by Dalit writers. On the one hand, according to the Orsini, champions of the mainstream Hindi public sphere "belonged to small zamindar or even peasant families whose fathers and grandfathers had sometimes gone into teaching, law, the lower echelons of government service or the army; they could be from families that still served as local landowners and worked as village clerks (*patwaris* and *kanungos*); or they could be scholarly or priestly Brahmins, educated in Sanskrit, who performed ritual duties in the village and sometimes taught at village schools (*pathsalas*); and finally they could belong to Agrawal and Khatri merchant families. They produced the first wave of literary activism and created institutional spaces for Hindi in the form of periodicals, literary, and public associations and textbooks. The social spectrum hardly widened after 1920: over half of the Hindi literary men and women were Brahmins including a few Bhumihars, while the rest were Kayasthas, Agrawals, Khatris, and Thakurs."[2]

[1] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 8
[2] Ibid., pp. 3-4

On the another hand, as Nandini Gooptu has shown, urban poor Dalits started to gather for discussions on their social, religious, and political conditions from the early twentieth century in UP. They came mostly from Chamar, Jatav and Nishad castes. They included social activists, teachers, advocates, homeopathic doctors, clerks, and so on. They foregrounded the interests and welfare of their community through their literature and started to question the State as well as the social functionaries who, they alleged, were not paying adequate attention to their problems. It is important to note in this context that while urban Dalits led the early phase of this new movement, from the 1950s onwards Dalits from the rural areas too joined the movement and made their presence felt. The emergence and development of Dalit literature was a most significant aspect of the emerging Hindi literature because it gave voice to a voiceless people.

In this chapter, I have focused on the work of mainstream caste Hindu Hindi writers who dwelt on untouchables and their conditions. Many celebrated Hindi writers, including Premchand, have been discussed here as a contrast to Dalit literary figures. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with various themes in the mainstream Hindi literature and I argue that while these display sympathy towards Dalits, they do so as part of an attempt to counter the influence of the Adi Hindu movement. Secondly, it was part also of an effort to incorporate Dalits within the ambit of a greater 'Hindu' identity through *Shuddhi* (purification) programmes. Gandhian notions of the '*Hridya Privartan*' were a dominant feature of these writings. Dalits were not presented as agents of change in this literature; rather their poor conditions and helplessness treated as an insurmountable obstacle was a characteristic feature of the mainstream Hindi literature. This section also explores the controversy around who exactly was the first Dalit poet in the Hindi speaking belt in the twentieth century. The second section deals with the operating mechanism of mainstream Hindi and Dalit print culture respectively. Questions related to establishment of printing presses, publication, distribution, readership, royalty, etc. will also be examined.

I

Themes in Mainstream Hindi Literature

I have chosen a variety of genres i.e. poem, story, play, 'autobiography', and essays to present a coherent picture of the mainstream Hindi literature. These pieces, however, do not represent the whole discourse nor exhaust all trends within mainstream literature.

Nonetheless, they do present a glimpse of popular Hindu culture. Interestingly, Dalits were become heroes of their story, play, etc. Their miserable conditions remained the dominant features of the literature. But there was hardly a solution exist.

I begin with ***'Pagli'*** (Mad Girl): A short story by Pandit Vishambhar Nath Sharma "Koushik" in 1922. Sudhiya, the protagonist, was a Chamar girl. Her father looked after the horses of Chandrakant, a caste Hindu. Radhakant, Chandrakant's younger brother started teaching Sudhiya when she was six year old. Chandrakant, and his wife reprimanded Radhakant for his initiative. Chandrakant's wife said that

> "*chamarin ko padakar sita savitri banaoge? Neech jati bhi kahi pada karti hai? Inhi baton se to malum hota hai ki ghor kaljug aa gaya. Acchi ulti ganga bahate ho. Chamarin to ab pade-likhengi aur ghodon ka dana bhale-ghar ke striyan dalengi.*"[3]

> Are you trying to discover a Sita or Savitri from within a Chamar girl by teaching her? Can the low castes ever be able to receive education? Such misdemenours [as upper caste man's attempt to teach a Dalit girl] prove for sure that *Kaljug* (Kali-age) has arrived. You are trying to *reverse* the flow of the *Ganga*. Now Chamar girls would study and women of respectable households [caste Hindus] would feed the horses.[4]

Radhakant persisted with his efforts nonetheless. After some time, a drastic change came over Sudhiya. She felt distinctly uneasy when Chandrakant's wife uttered degrading words and abused her caste. But Sudhiya's father and her community members noticed nothing particularly demeaning. One day, Chandrakant's wife beat up Sudhiya because she allegedly slept during working hours. This incident marked a new change in her life. She refused to read a new book when Radhakant wanted to give her one. She asked him some questions on the Varna system and untouchability. She asked, for instance, "why caste Hindus calls her and her caste people untouchables even though she takes bath daily and washes her clothes every two-three days. But Kahars do not bathe for many days and live a dirty life. Nevertheless, you eat all things given by them."[5] Radhakant had no satisfactory answers to

[3] Pandit Vishambhar Nath Sharma "Koushik"; 'Pagli' (Mad Woman) in Sarasvati (Hindi Journal, Allahabad), July 1922, NMML, p. 65
[4] (translation mine from Hindi)
[5] Pandit Vishambhar Nath Sharma "Koushik"; 'Pagli' (Mad Woman) in Sarasvati (Hindi Journal, Allahabad), July 1922, NMML, p. 66 (translation mine from Hindi)

offer. He only said that "it was our old tradition which was backed by our *Shastras*."[6] After this discussion, the story leaps forward by five years: People now called Sudhiya a '*Pagli*' (a mad girl) and her father said that "… today she is very afraid of books… she burnt all the books which she had."[7]

In the story, Sudhiya was termed as '*Pagli*'; but why? Was it education that robbed her of sanity? After all, ostensibly educational instructions from Radhakant bred the feeling of dissatisfaction and uneasiness in Sudhiya. She became aware of her identity and raised a question mark over the whole Brahmanical set-up. The question of caste awareness and purity-pollution became important concerns for her. The Brahmanical binary between purity-impurity was linked to birth alone. But she associated it with the kind of sanitary and physical purity and impurity which she saw practiced around her. Therefore, she argued that a Kahar was impure because he did not display physical cleanliness. Further, it was important that she felt humiliated when caste Hindus abused her caste. She could have perhaps want to respond with harsh words. Unfortunately, the author did not allow her that space. She did, however, ask questions about the caste system, untouchability, purity-impurity and those questions were 'normally' out of bounds for an untouchable. That is why I think she was termed as '*Pagli*'; because she was looking beyond 'traditional knowledge' of the untouchables acquired from Brahmans *without questions*.

The story revealed that in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, some educated caste Hindus were influenced by the concept of the modernity. Thus inspired, they wished to bring in positive social reforms. They wanted to become agents of reform but *not change*. It was considered the duty of upper castes to 'raise' the status of low castes. At the same time, they also wanted to sustain the existing system with limited reforms. This is clearly depicted in the story. For example, on the one hand, Radhakant displays this upper caste generosity by teaching Dalits like Sudhiya. On the other, he also beats her up when she touched his *Pan-dabba* (box of betel). When Sudhiya asked him why Chamars were untouchables, he had no answer except that it was the 'tradition'. Thus, he embraced the liberating potential of modernity but without moving out altogether of his 'feudal' and patriarchical, thereby casteist, set up. Further, it was portrayed that caste Hindus were not ready to accept educated untouchables. If the matter related to women's education, it was considered a facile effort.

[6] Ibid. (translation mine from Hindi)
[7] Ibid., p. 69 (translation mine from Hindi)

Caste Hindu women did not find any reason to educate them. This was not required for their work, rather it would make them difficult to work. With this fact that a caste Hindu author brings out these limitations of reforms is also a significant fact.

There were many writings in the mainstream Hindi literature where the caste system was rationalized as a positive tradition. Govardhan Lal, a non-Dalit Hindi writer, argues in an article published in the *Sarasvati* in 1922 that "it is only because of the caste system that farmers and labourers who are so impoverished – they do not get full diet in evening, and a few castes who are untouchables and they are treated worse than animals, despite that India does not face any bloodshed, hatred and war."[8] It is certainly not the caste system per se which prevented bloodshed or war. It was the hegemonized mentality of the oppressed and their belief in *Karma* and fatalism. They wished neither to interfere with God's will nor change their fate. This picture was painted with the Brahmanical brushes.

However, there were some writers who wanted to abolish the Varna system because it created divisions among people. For instance, Pandit Rambiharilal Shastri highlights, in his book ***'Kranti ka Bigul athwa Sab Sudharon ki Kunji'*** (Bugle of Revolution or Key to All Reforms), that "there could be no development and reforms in the Hindu society because of the Varna system. There is no reference of hundred castes and thousands sub-castes in the religious texts of conservatives [Hindus]. As the *Manusmriti* also laid down, there are only four Varnas. So, the conservative [Hindus] should abolish various castes and sub-castes… [They] should start the *Roti-Beti*[9] behavior among them."[10] In other words, Shastri wanted Hindus to share food and marry their daughters to Dalits. Interestingly, the ideas of the author were very similar with Ambedkar's 'The Annihilation of Caste'. But in real terms, such good-natured admonitions led to no changes in the established practices. They remained as rigid as ever. In fact, the author held the *Varna* system indirectly responsible for the arrival and persistence of colonial rule in India. He lamented that "it was only the Varna system that made India a slave under the British rule. This prevented Indians from becoming united as a

[8] Govardhan Lal; 'Jativad ka Swatantravad' (Sovereignty of Casteism) in Sarasvati (Hindi Journal, Allahabad), May 1922, NMML, p. 311 (translation mine from Hindi)

[9] *Roti* (bread) and *Beti* (daughter) is considered very important among Hindus. This is the prominent feature of relationship and brotherhood.

[10] Pandit Rambiharilal Shastri; Kranti ka Bigul athwa Sab Sudharon ki Kunji (Bugle of Revolution or Key to All Reforms), Kanpur, (the year of publication is not mentioned but content of the booklet shows that it was around 1932), pp. 1-2 (translation mine from Hindi)

single country. It is only because of this abominable system that sixty thousand soldiers and sixty thousand non-soldiers are ruling over thirty crores people."[11]

Premchand and Dalit Critique

There is no doubt that Premchand was the first prominent upper caste writer who, moved by the plight of Dalits, gave them a literary voice. Despite this, Dalits writers did not consider his work as a part of the Dalit literature. Dalits considered that Premchand's literature was written in a sympathetic mode. The background of a powerful nationalist drive—informed by, as we saw earlier, a desire to 'lift' Dalits—behind his literature cannot be seen as altogether unproblematic. Elaborating on this point, Kanwal Bharti writes that the "basis of Dalit literature is the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar who demanded abolition of caste and Varna system. Brahmanism was his enemy. On the other hand, Premchand was a Gandhian who believed in the Varna order…. Unfortunately, Premchand was a writer of that kind whose love for the Dalit is limited to removal of untouchability only."[12] Dalit writer Omprakash Balmiki says that "Premchand wrote many stories about Dalit awareness like '*Sadgati*' (The Deliverance), '*Thakur ka Kuwan*' (The well of Thakur), '*Dudh ka Dam*' (Price of Milk)… He was influenced by the ideas of Gandhi. There is a dilemma in his writings. On the one hand, he has sympathy with Dalits. On the other hand, he shows his belief in the Varna system."[13]

Premchand has been praised by upper castes writers, Sadanand Shahi and others, for his famous story '*Kafan*' (The Shroud). They explained that Premchand has brought out all the sorrows of the Dalits. But Dalit writers do not consider it a story of Dalits; rather they declared it an anti-Dalit story.

According to the story, Ghisu and his son Madhav were good for nothing Chamars, the kind that would suffer hunger but would not work for a living. On the day Madhav's wife Budhiya was crying with delivery pain, father and son were busy roasting potatoes. Both

[11] Ibid., p. 3 (translation mine from Hindi)
[12] Kanwal Bharti; "Dalit Sahitya aur Premchand" (Dalit Literature and Premchand) in Sadanand Shahi (ed.) Dalit Sahitya ki Avadharana aur Premchand (The Philosophy of Dalit Literature and Premchand), Gorakhpur: Premchand Sahitya Sansthan, 2000, pp. 93-94 (translation mine from Hindi)
[13] Ibid., pp. 87-88 (translation mine from Hindi)

thereafter ate the roasted potatoes and went off to sleep. In the morning, Madhav found that his wife had passed away and her unborn child too had died in her womb. They went to the Zamindar and to villagers to collect some money for her final rites. They collected five rupees and went to city to buy *Kafan*. But they did not buy the *Kafan*; rather they drank alcohol and ate their fill. They both began to dance… overcome by drunkenness, they collapsed.[14]

Kanwal Bharti argues that in this story "Premchand is making a mockery of Dalits. Premchand is giving the massage that poverty is the major problem of Dalits. It is only poverty which had bred many evils among Dalits and inhuman persons like Ghisu and Madav. But Premchand forgets that the Varna system and unequal distribution of the resources was the major sources of the problems of Dalits. Why did he not explore this aspect behind their laziness?" [15] But Sadanand Shahi, a non-Dalit writer, argues that influence of Dr. Ambedkar had not yet reached Eastern UP, where Premchand lived. Rather, this story shows the influence of Kabir on Ghisu. Ghisu said that "Isn't this *Kafan* too burnt with the dead body? What is left? If [we had] got these five rupees earlier then [we] would bring medicine for her."[16]

Premchand has certainly shown the 'degraded' conditions of Chamars. But he bypassed the reasons behind it. Why exactly did the Chamars devote such obsessive attention to food even as a human being lay struggling with death in an adjacent room? It was the feudal system and the caste system which were responsible for the 'inhuman' behaviour of Ghisu and Madhav. There was no higher 'human' value invested in the untouchables; they had been normatively reduced to a poor and low status which produced no elevated 'human' concerns. Caste had convinced them that there would be no change in their position, no matter how hard they worked. The social order denied them any option of social and economic upward mobility.

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[14] This story was first published in Urdu (1935) then Hindi (1936). Zabir Hussain (ed); Premchand Rachanavali-Part XV, (Collected Works of Munshi Premchand), Delhi: Janvani Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1996, pp. 401-07 (translation mine from Hindi)

[15] Kanwal Bharti; "Dalit Sahitya aur Premchand" (Dalit Literature and Premchand) in Sadanand Shahi (ed.) Dalit Sahitya ki Avadharana aur Premchand (the Philosophy of Dalit Literature and Premchand), Gorakhpur: Premchand Sahitya Sansthan, 2000, p. 89 (translation mine from Hindi)

[16] Sadanand Shahi; "Kya Kafan Dalit Virodhi Kahani Hai?" (Is Kafan Anti-Dalit Story?) in Sadanand Shahi (ed.) Dalit Sahitya ki Avadharana aur Premchand (the Philosophy of Dalit Literature and Premchand), Gorakhpur: Premchand Sahitya Sansthan, 2000, pp. 102-03 (translation mine from Hindi)

'*Mandir*' (The Temple): a short story by Premchand, May 1927.

In this story, Sukhiya, a Chamar woman, prayed for the *darshan* of the God to save her only child who was terminally ill. Premchand raised in this story the question of temple entry which Gandhi considered a powerful means for Dalit upliftment. But in real life, caste Hindus never allowed Dalits entry into 'their temples'; even when their lives were in danger. Sukhiya knew that Dalits were not allowed into the temple. But she insisted on *darshan* because, she thought, the life of her child could be saved only if she worshiped *Thakur jee* (God of temple). Finally her attempt took her and her child's lives.[17]

The story could fill the heart with sympathy, but it would be more appropriate if Premchand made some Chamars wake up and take charge of their lives. Further, the story did not show the futility of temple entry. However, Sukhiya said that she would not come into the temple. She said because there was no one left for her as her husband and only child were already dead. But she did not actively express no faith in God. There was no change in the lives of caste Hindus; there was no feeling of repentance among them. There was no sign of the Gandhain *Hridya Parivartan* among caste Hindus. It seems that Premchand had accepted the reality that there would be no change in the caste Hindu mentality. Guru Prasad Madan, a Dalit writer, argues that it was on account of the impact of the Adi Hindu movement on Premchand that he wrote about untouchables. Premchand incidentally had been living in an area where the Adi Hindu movement recorded a marked progress.[18]

'*Acchutodhar*' (Uplift of Untouchables): A play by G.P. Srivastva in 1927.

G.P. Srivastva wrote a play '*Acchutodhar*' which was published in May, 1927. There were four characters in the play. First three characters Dabbu, his wife Shikshavati and her sister Vidyavati were caste Hindus while Bela was the untouchable. Shikshavati and Vidyavati were very conscious about the use of a cultured and Sanskritized language. Their maid, Bela was not educated but she was well versed in household work. But they could not tolerate the use of '*Acchut*' (untouchable) words by Bela. Therefore, to save their language from defilement, they threw Bela out from their home. Initially, Dabbu did not confront them.

[17] Premchand; '*Mandir*' (The Temple), in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), pp. 65-69 (translation mine from Hindi)
[18] Personal Interview with Guru Prasad Madan (age 69) Allahabad on January 30, 2012 at 7:30 am

Finally though, the author says through Dabbu that "because of untouchability, Hindu society is in danger. And now you [Shikshavati and Vidyavati] want to spread this evil into language also."[19]

The play presented a process of Sanskritization of language and how upper castes maintained their superiority in manners and tastes. The throwing out of Bela—the conflation of linguistic and physical excommunication or ouster—exemplified the dilemma of caste Hindus. On the one hand, they boasted about reforms and uplift of Dalits. On the other hand, in practice, they failed to a stand in defence of the livelihood concerns of an individual such as Bela.

'***Samaj Ka Agnikund'*** (Fire-Alter of Society): an 'autobiography' by Jahoorbakhshjee 'Hindi-Kovid' in 1927.

Jahoorbakhshjee 'Hindi-Kovid' wrote an article '***Samaj Ka Agnikund'*** in 1927. He had used the form of an 'autobiography' of an untouchable. Generally, an autobiography is written by the writer himself. His essay is an exception, according to the writer of this article. He was narrating what was told to him by an untouchable who had converted to Christianity. In that sense the writer decided to classify his work as an 'autobiography' of an untouchable.

Tomas, an Indian Christian, was a Tehsildar (magistrate). He was very friendly with Christians and Muslims but he hated Hindus. Once, a Brahman, his subordinate, asked Tomas for leave because his wife had been seriously ill. But Tomas scolded him and refused him leave. Then the Brahman, with fear in his heart, asked Tomas why he was so very hard on Hindus. What sin had they had committed? He answered, "… I understand that there is no other sinner (*Paapi*) race like Hindus in the whole world. You say that Christians are sinners and they covet others' property. The Muslims, you claim, are sinners – big sinners because they give trouble to Hindus. But Brahman! Don't mind when I say that Christians and Muslims are no match for Hindus in committing sins… They love their race. [But] Your race (Hindus) gives troubles to its own people [untouchables]. Hindus become happy when they

[19] G.P. Srivastva; "Acchutodhar" (Uplift of Untouchable), in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), p. 114 (translation mine from Hindi)

commit atrocities against poor people… I was born as a Hindu, but you [Hindus] made me convert to Christianity."[20]

Tomas cited many examples of the tyranny of caste Hindus over untouchables. Once, in his childhood, he went into a temple in his village with his friend, a zamindar's son. Then priest cried and "he lost his senses… Oh God! The courage of the low [untouchable] is increasing in the *Kaljug* kali-age). Now our prestige is in your hands. Saying this, they began raining blows on the child Damroo (Tomas). They beat him with a brutality reserved not even for animals."[21] Another incident happened when Damroo went to the village well to quench his thirst. Caste Hindus punished his mother by raping her. Later on, some Missionaries came to his village and his mother went with them and they provided her and her child a life free from the slavery of caste Hindus. There was no untouchability. All were equal. Damroo started going to school and later on, he became a Tehsildar which he could not become if he remained an untouchable Hindu.[22]

Tomas said to the Brahman, that if "these activities of yours (atrocities, suppression, etc.) persist, then the day is not far when all untouchables would discard Hinduism and convert to other religions… Now they are with you, so they appear low to you. When they would leave, then you would shed tears for them… Now you are 22 crores, when they separate you would be 15 crores only… If you treat them with love and humane behavior then they would shed their blood where your sweat would fall. Think! You would be very weak following the loss of a very strong force…"[23] The eyes of the Brahman were finally opened. He declared that "he would treat all untouchables as his brothers. I would never hate them. I would love them. I would understand my duty to assimilate their sorrows and happiness and I would force my brethren to adhere to this duty."[24]

No doubt the writer has portrayed the plight of untouchables. The timing of the 'autobiography' is particularly crucial because, now, untouchables were demanding separate electorates. The question of numbers (census enumeration) in the context of expanding

[20] Jahoorbakhsh 'Hindi-Kovid'; 'Samaj Ka Agnikund' (Fire-Alter of Society) in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), p. 80 (translation mine from Hindi)
[21] Ibid., pp. 85-86 (translation mine from Hindi)
[22] Ibid., pp. 86-87 (translation mine from Hindi)
[23] Ibid., p. 88 (translation mine from Hindi)
[24] Ibid. (translation mine from Hindi)

democracy, popular participation in politics and rising Hindu-Muslim antagonism, became especially loaded with value and significance. Numerical strength was henceforth to be the most decisive resource for demanding, and securing, political rights. The attitude of the Brahman was very similar to the Arya Samaj's ideology. They were against conversion and wanted to restore converted Dalits to Hinduism.

At the same time, the Gandhian philosophy of *Hridya Privartan* too had emerged as a possible social reform option. Some caste Hindus had been worrying that without Dalits, Hinduism itself would be in danger of being reduced to a monolith. Gandhi's famous slogan 'Hindu religion is in danger' best sums up this line of thought. From the beginning of this piece of writing, Tomas insisted that they would not want to be Christians if they were treated with equality within Hinduism. Christianity was the last option for him to survive. The author wanted to convey the message that if caste Hindus did not bring reforms in their religion and society, then it would be harmful for them.

However, Swami Acchutanand was against of conversion of Dalits to the Christianity. He said that such conversions made them forget their 'real identity' as the original inhabitants of India. For him, conversion was not the remedy of their sorrows; only self-awareness and feeling of self-respect would bring a change in their lives. But there was a large portion of the Depressed Classes who converted to Christianity. There are many sketches and 'slogans' in the *Chand* (Hindi journal) which shows the free lives and bright futures of Indian Christian who were converted untouchables. Therefore, the threat of conversion to Christianity was effectively an ultimatum to caste Hindus. If they wanted to save their religion, society, economy and political conditions, they would have to bring reforms in their attitude and perception towards untouchables. It seems that this massage was exclusively for caste Hindus because the *Chand* journal was popular among them.

Poems: one by Pandit Anoop Sharma and another by Shobharam "Dhenu Sevak" in 1927

Morh baithe kyon svadharm-anuyayiyon se,
chhor baithe aap svajati ke sapooton ko!
Gorh baithe apne mahan abhimaan hi se,
maan ko, guman ko, mahan kartuton ko!!
Sambhal sake na saal saikdon vyateet huve,

dala hai vidharm me svadharm ke prasuton ko!
Ab to sudharo heen haal ko hui hai der,
ab to ubaro in patit achhoton ko!![25]

Why have you turned away from followers [untouchables] of your own religion, disowned children who belonged to your own community? You have forgotten your pride, dignity and great deeds because of arrogance./ Hundred of years have passed but [you] could not understand [that] you have forced children of your religion away to other creeds./ It is very late, now at least lift the fallen and the untouchable./[26]

Samay hai Hinduon ab bhi-
Tumhare chet jane ka!
Haridaya visteern kar-
Sankeeranta ko ab nashane ka!
Kutil asprashyata ki-
Kalima ko dho bahane ka!
Acchuton ko utha kar prem-
Se apna banane ka!
Acchuton ko uthane ke liye-
Taiyar ho jao!
Hamare sath me tum bhi
Patan ke par ho jao!![27]

[Oh] Hindus, There is time yet/ to expand [your] hearts and remove narrowness/ to wash the cruel practice of untouchability away/ to raise Dalits and to make them your own with love/ get ready to lift the untouchables/ [thus] and together let us arrest the fall /[28]

Both poems take up the question of untouchability. Caste Hindus were very worried about the 'destruction' of their Hindu religion when if untouchables left the Hindu fold. Why this concern emerged so prominently in the 1920s requires a brief digression. The right of separate electorates was granted to Muslims in 1909. It was extended to Sikhs of Punjab and non-Brahmans of Madras by the Act of 1919. The Simon Commission was formed to consider further political reforms in British India. Around this time, Dalits too had started to demand separate electorates. Swami Acchutanand took great pains in spreading awareness regarding separate electorates as a means to greater political empowerment for Dalits.

[25] Pandit Anoop Sharma; 'Achhut' (Untouchable), in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), p. 57
[26] Translation mine from Hindi
[27] Shobharam "Dhenu Sevak"; "Acchut Aavedan" (Untouchable Appeal) in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), p. 15
[28] Translation mine from Hindi

Therefore, it was an ultimatum for caste Hindus to show their 'generosity' towards untouchables. They were not only writing about the sorrows of Dalits but at the same time raising an alarm about the imminent threat of emasculation, and even extinction, of their religion. They wanted to show that without untouchables there would be a great loss of caste Hindus in all sectors like politics, society, economics and finally, religion. Therefore, untouchables should be allowed into temples and accorded respect. Without these, the very existence of caste Hindus was said to be in danger.

In these kinds of poems, ironically, the focus is directed to the religio-political significance of untouchables in terms of numbers. They were in fact hailed as 'worthy sons of Hindus'. This was without a trace of doubt a tactic to assimilate them within the broader political community framed by the cultural essence of Brahmanical Hinduism. But these poems raised only religious questions. They offered no schemes to improve the political and economic conditions of Dalits.

'*Shambook*': a play by Prof. Sadgurusharan in 1942

Shambook is a most important character in Dalit history. The first reference came in the Valmiki's Ramayana. Thereafter, many intellectuals, Dalit and non-Dalits, used their pen to draw his various pictures. In the Dalit literature, Swami Acchutanand was the first person in the Hindi belt to write a play on his teachings and his unjust murder by Rama. In mainstream Hindi literature, we found a play '*Shambook*' written by Prof. Sadgurusharan. This was published in the journal '*Madhuri*' in 1942. Once again, the timing of publication was significant. At that time, the Cripps Mission was declared a failure by the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress was busy with preparations for the Quit India movement. Dalits were supporting the war efforts of the Government. A grand conference of Dalits was called in Nagpur in 1942, and subsequently their central political organization, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, was formed. The publication of a play with a Dalit playing the hero at this moment is best understood as a response to the most pressing need of the hour.

This play was very different from that of Swami Acchutanand's play. Here Shambook was shown as a disciple of Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra tried to persuade Shambook that "his

true religion is to provide service to others. If he does this he is respectable."[29] But Shambook did not consider his suggestion. It is important to note that neither did Vishvamitra issue a non-negotiable order like other Brahman sages like Vashishtha nor did Shambook obey it blindly, unlike say Rama. There clearly was a space for dialogue there between the *Guru* and his disciple. It may be because Vishvamitra himself did not originally belong to the Brahman *Varna* and/or Shambook was not a Kshatriya. Both were in sense referring to their personal development, i.e. then upward mobility to a higher Varna.

An old Brahman raised the question of the justice of the rule of Rama because his young son has died. He accused Rama of presiding over an unjust regime where Shudras were acquiring the profession of Brahmans and held that state of affairs as the reason for his son's premature death. Thereafter, Rama asked Vashishtha if ensuring observance of the Varna system did not count as one of his responsibilities as the king. Vashishtha explained to him that this system alone empowered the Aryans to maintain their rule. Vashishtha said to Rama:

> "Agar unka man nahi lagta hai to bhi nahi chorh sakte, Raja ko aise hallat nahi paida hone dene chahiye ki janta varna system ko chhorhna chahe…Agar vah [Shambook] samjhane se maan jaye to, use kshama kiya ja sakta hai, nahi to uska vadh nitant nyaya sangat hai. Shastra ki raksha me weapon ko anupyogi na samajhna chahiye. "[30]
>
> It was duty of ruler that he should obviate the emergence of those conditions which encouraged his subject to deviate from their Varna specific duties. They must not be allowed to change their *varna*—enshrined duties even if they don't enjoy them… He could be forgiven if is persuaded out of this adventure; if he persists, his execution certainly conforms to justice. Weapons (with which to execute a deviant) should never be considered unnecessary when it comes to the defence of the *Shastras* (religious Brahmanical texts).[31]

The framing of the subsequent dialogue between Vashishtha and Rama made it clear that the Varna system was constructed to make Shudras perpetual slaves to the upper castes.

[29] Prof. Sadgurusharan; 'Shambook' in Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 20, Part 2, No. 5, June, 1942, NMML, p. 502 (translation mine from Hindi)
[30] Ibid., p. 508
[31] Translation mine from Hindi

Vashishtha advised Rama that Shambook was a Shudra, and therefore not entitled to *Tapasya* and should be punished by the lord of land. Rama declared that he did not want to be an intellectual but wanted merely to hang on to the thread of devotion. "Oh master forever, I do not doubt your conclusion even for a moment"[32], gushed Rama.

Rama wondered aloud to Shambook that if Shudras would leave their paternal/traditional work and took over the work of Brahmans, then no one would be left to offer menial services to upper castes. He thundered that he would not tolerate such role reversals in his kingdom. Division of labour/work was after all the best and most valuable part of the Varna system; there was no vested interest of Aryans in this system, public division of labour in society is not different from division of labour within the family.[33]

In the end, Shambook was executed by Rama. Before that however, he warns the latter that "there will come a moment when many people would like to destroy the caste system. Crores of Shambooks will be born from my blood. Rama will be nowhere. Your false/fake Aryan civilization must restrain itself…there is time yet for this Brahmanism standing at the edge of a precipice to see sense."[34]

During the freedom struggle, Gandhi expressed his ideas about establishing a *Ram Rajya* in India. He believed in respect for work/labour. In this play too, we find reference to freedom, individuality, right to choose one's professions. But they are all through the filter of the Varna system. This very idea is itself against the true spirit of the democracy. Gandhi and his caste Hindus did not really want to take a step forward; they were effectively defending backwardness and outmoded practices. Gandhi praised lord Ram for his benevolent rule and his rule was appreciated for 'the welfare of people'. Gandhi wanted to restore that *Ram Rajya* in modern times. Gandhi wrote, "*Ram Rajya* can be religiously translated a 'kingdom of God on Earth', politically translated it is perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it land and State belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and, therefore there is freedom of worship, speech and the press..."[35] but the play exposes Rama. It does not predict the future but it

[32] Prof. Sadgurusharan; 'Shambook' in Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 20, Part 2, No. 5, June, 1942, NMML, p. 509 (translation mine from Hindi)
[33] Ibid., p. 510
[34] Ibid., p. 514 (translation mine from Hindi)
[35] The Pioneer (English, Lucknow), Wednesday, June 13, 1945, p. 11

refers to a past when all paths were indeed closed. If Gandhi and the author wanted to restore the Varna order, as they believed. Then, there is no doubt whatsoever that all ways of real Dalit uplift had been closed permanently. It encouraged no possibility of acquiring knowledge and education as these were interpreted as transgressions against the Varna system.

In Dalit plays on the same theme, Shambook is firmly placed within the Shudra Varna. But his automatic connection with Shudra Varna is rendered problematic when Vishvamitra probes his paternity. Shambook informed him that his mother had been a *Dasi* (slave) at a hermitage of a Brahman, Vatsyayan. But she never responded clearly when he asked her about his father. Vishvamitra nodded that "*main bahut kuch samajh gaya*" (he understood a great deal indeed).[36] Viswamitra probably suspected that Shambook was the son of that Brahman sage, therefore, he was not taking interest in the 'traditional' work of Shudra, and took great interest in *Tapasya* and reading. It was an instance perhaps of the Brahmanization of Shambook. There is a long history of Brahmanism whereby it had incorporated those great non-Brahman personalities who had become famous in course of history. Buddha, Chokhamela, Ravidas are some of major personalities who were thus co-opted in the Brahmanical fold. The same perhaps had been happening with Shambook. In this play, he was implicitly shown as a 'Brahman' son, and as such, naturally inclined to the Brahmanical vocations of learning and meditation. To that extent, this play served as a nuanced device promoting the cultural hegemony of Brahmanism.

From the Dalit perspective, however, the play presented a distortion of their history. Shambook was not portrayed a leader of Shudras; he was introduced as a mere Shudra individual. His concern was not upliftment of their whole community but a quest for internal peace and personal development. To that extent, this play, instead to advocating Dalit solidarity, actually advises Dalits to work hard at their personal upliftment.

Chanwar Purana (Chamar Purana) in 1950.

Originally this *Purana* was given by a Brahman sage of Tibet to Keshav Prasad in Tibet. It was reproduced by Shri 108 Mahatma Jokhandasjee Maharaj in 1950. The publisher

[36] Prof. Sadgurusharan; 'Shambook' in Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 20, Part 2, No. 5, June, 1942, NMML, pp. 500-01

of the booklet claimed that originally it was written in *Dev-Bhasha* (Sanskrit) and translated for the readers of Hindi to enhance their knowledge. The proof of authenticity was purportedly the same as that of *Gururh Purana*. In the *Gururh Purana*, *Gururh* was the eyewitness (*Sakshi*) and here Narad was allotted the same role. The publisher claimed that if anyone proved it false than they would give him a Rs. 50000 reward.[37]

This was an attempt to show that the Chamars were originally a warrior caste. They had a thriving kingdom and ruled for a long period. According to the booklet, the Chanwar (Chamar) was a prominent dynasty which belonged to the *Dwijas* of the *Suryavansh* (dynasty linked to Sun God) group at the beginning of the universe. Vishnu reportedly ordered Narad to narrate the story of the *Purana* to gods in *Devlok* (world of Gods), so as to explain to them how the Chanwar dynasty came into being, prospered and how and why they fell into obscurity, only to emerge as the Chamars of the present.

With the end of the *Dwaper* age, the *Kaliyug* had begun.[38] With that anarchy prevailed everywhere. This state of affairs had been going on for some 47,523 years, and then Yashwant (Raidas), son of Raghu, was born. He was an intelligent and learned man and soon became very popular. The fame of his knowledge reportedly made even the throne of Indra, lord of heaven, tremble in awe. The Queen of Chittor, Meera and her family became his disciples. Brahmans of the land soon enough began to resent Raidas' wisdom and popularity. After living for 120 years, Raidas reached *Devlok*. When Raidas was taken before Vishnu, his throne started trembling and all the gods present there were surprised out of their wits. The alarm of "*Chamar-Chamar*" was raised all around. All gods ran up to Vishnu and asked how and why a Chamar made it to the *Devlok*. That unprecedented entry destabilized all accepted structures of sign and meaning. That was when Vishnu ordered sage Narad to narrate the story of Chanwar dynasty to the utterly bemused gods, in order to remove their apprehension and to ensure that Raidas was welcomed with the honour due to him.[39] In effect, the drama reclaims history for Raidas and his followers, seeking to restore them to a position of dignity and equality which was their due according to the norms of natural justice. Of particular interest here is the fact the writing a history or claiming a particular past through a certain

[37] Chanwar Purana,Published by Shri 108 Mahatma Jokhandasjee Maharaj, Ayodhya, 1950, pp. 1-2
[38] According to Brahmanical mythology, there are four era (yug). Satyug, Treta, Dwaper and Kaliyug. Now Kaliyug is on process.
[39] Chanwar Purana,Published by Shri 108 Mahatma Jokhandasjee Maharaj, Ayodhya, 1950, pp. 3-7

type of linear narrative prose and getting others to concede to it had by now become a most necessary component of political mobilization.

Narad started the story: In the beginning of *Satyug*, among *Dwijas*, the Chanwar dynasty was great and their rule lasted for 2,56,57,925 years. Chanwarsen was the first king of this dynasty. While telling the story, Narad called all Mahatmas of Chanwar dynasty who had been living in the *Bekunthlok* (abode of Vishnu) to report to Lord Vishnu. They all showed up one by one, their bodies heavily covered by sacred threads. All the gods immediately begged forgiveness from Vishnu and Narad for their lack of knowledge and understanding of the reality of Raidas and beseeched them to give proper respect and place to Raidas in the court of Vishnu.[40]

Chamundrai was the last of this dynasty. He paid proper respect to the Varna order and Brahmans in his rule. After a successful rule, he took to renunciation and went up to the Kailash Mountain to undertake *Tapasya* (meditation). There, he somehow managed to disgrace the gods, the Vedas and Vishnu. As punishment, Vishnu cursed him that "his dynasty would disappear from the earth and your successors will be called Chamar from now onward. They will be treated lower than the Shudras and engaged in unclean occupations."[41] However, Vishnu also rewarded him for his *Bhakti* and service to the Varna order and placed him into *Bekunthlok*. But the Sun God took great offence at this decision and withheld his rays from the earth. To pacify him, Vishnu reassured that "his dynasty will again come into existence and they will spread his glory in whole world. This dynasty will survive in the *Kaliyug*. One white Brahman would again establish the light of God Vedas. Then this caste would have a chance to hear the glorious history of their ancestors and become the high Varna."[42]

According to the *Purana*, the Chamars were originally followers of the Vedas. They displayed proper respect to the Brahmans and so their rule continued for a long time. But when they offended Brahmans, it became dangerous for them and even their existence was in jeopardy. It is clear that the writer of this *Purana*, wanted to argue that if in present life, in free India, the Chamars did not offer proper respect to the lord of earth, to the gods and the Vedas and the Brahmans, their existence might again be in danger. Even in such ostensibly

[40] Ibid., pp. 8-15
[41] Ibid., p. 55
[42] Ibid., pp. 58-59

pro-Dalit accounts, the structure of the cultural hegemony of Brahmans over Chamars is neither questioned nor challenged or displaced.

Again, being a purportedly mythological text, this *Purana* also (mis)guided Chamars that they were *Dwijas* and had enjoyed a thriving kingdom which conformed to and upheld the Varna system. The presence of the thriving kingdom in this imaginary reflects an analogous element in the Adi Hindu theory but the provision of adherence to the Vedas directly connected with the emergence of and circulated by the Arya Samaj. According to the *Purana*, in *Kaliyug*, a white skinned caste would establish rule over a great part of the earth. A great *rishi* (sage) would establish again the greatness of the Vedas.[43] Ramnarayan Rawat says that it was Raidas.[44] However, according to the Purana, Chamars would establish their kingdom in the *Kaliyug*. But this did not happen. Brahmans established their hegemony over a great part of the earth. It seems that this 'white skinned' person was perhaps Swami Dayanand Sarasvati. He actually re-established again the 'greatness' of the Vedas. Soon afterwards, there was said to be an initiation of the *Shuddhi* programme. It is instructive to recall that in its early stage in the 1880s and 1890s, this programme was designed to lure converted Muslims back to the congregational folds of Hinduism. In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, *Shuddhi* programme were suitably tailored to incorporate the untouchables into the Arya Samaj, that is, mainstream congregational Hinduism.

In contemporary politics, Chamars stood at the forefront of Dalit movement and offered leadership to all untouchable castes. The publication of this *Purana*, it seems, was aimed at undercutting this united leadership of the Dalit movement and engineering a division therein. It may be legitimately understood as planting doubts in the minds of Dalits, by a selective promotion of some at the cost of others, about their shared political identity. If the Chamars started considering themselves Kshatriya, the Dalit movement stood to lose their most productive source of competent leadership, went the discourse that motivated the composition of such *Puranas*.

Interestingly, Raidas was shown here as a devotee of Vishnu. It seems that like the Buddha, Raidas too had become a 'victim' of Hinduization. In another work, Raidas was portrayed as a follower of Vaishnavism. Kishoredas Vajpayi argues that "Raidas is a

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ramnarayan S. Rawat; Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011, p. 126

mukutmani jewel in the Hindu crown… Vaishnavism raised Raidas and Raidas raised it to new heights. There is no exaggeration in the claim that Vaishnavism reached its peak only after it lapped up Raidas."[45]

In mainstream Hindi literature, there is thus a good deal of material available on Dalits but they did not acknowledge Dalit writers and their literature. They did not even mention the Dalit literary discourse. Kanwal Bharti says that "from Ramchandra Sukla to Ramvilas Sharma all Hindi critics left the '*Dalit Navjagran*' (Dalit Renaissance) unnoticed in the Hindi literature. Consequently, 'Hindi literature' became 'Hindu literature' and despite riding high on conservative waves, Hindu writers were hailed as progressive. Therefore, in the stream of Dalit discourse, for Dalit writers, Premchand and Nirala did not look natural."[46]

As we have seen, mainstream writers certainly highlighted the sorrows of Dalits but driven only by a motive to raise their present status *within* Hinduism. They focused on temple entry, right of worship, abolition of untouchability, etc. But, as I have already argued, religious concerns were not really central for Dalits themselves. Dalits themselves did not raise the question of the temple entry. On their own, they raised secular and rational questions of political rights and representation and they wanted improvements in their immediate material, particularly economic, conditions. Unfortunately, the mainstream writers did not want to probe these questions.

First Dalit Poet: A Controversy

There is a controversy surrounding the first untouchable poet in the Hindi belt who had used the print media in the UP. Swami Acchutanand himself claimed to be the first Dalit poet in UP. His first booklet, a collection of *Bhajans*, was published in1913 from Agra (available in the personal library of famous Hindi poet and litterateur, Guru Prasad Madan of Allahabad). Only the pages from 19 to 25 are available in the library with the last page dated

[45] Kishoredas Vajpeyi 'Shastri'; "Kuch Acchut Sant aur Bhakt' (Some Untouchable Saints and Devotees), in Chand (Hindi Journal, Allahabad) May 1927, Reprinted by New Delhi: Radhakrishana Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2011 (third edition), p. 28 (translation mine from Hindi)

[46] Kanwal Bharti; Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' aur Hindi Navjagran (Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' and Hindi Renaissance), New Delhi: Swaraj Prakashan, 2011, pp. 269-70 (translation mine from Hindi)

as 3.5.1913.[47] However, in September 1914, the reputed Hindi magazine '*Sarasvati*' published a poem '*Achhut Ki Shikayat*' (Complaint of Untouchables) written by Hira Dom. Some scholars of Hindi literature like Ramnika Gupta, S.S. Bechain[48] and others have acclaimed Hira Dom as the first Dalit poet in UP. Another group of Dalit intellectuals like Guru Prasad Madan suggest that Hira Dom was not a Dalit poet at all. They claimed that there was no real literary individual with the name of Hira Dom and that the name was the invention of caste Hindus to mobilize untouchables for the 'nationalist' stream of literature. Madan further argues that we have only one poem by Hira Dom informed by no distinct historical content or consciousness. It is simply a complaint to God for the ill treatment inflicted on him by the caste Hindus. There is no evidence of his other poems. If such a person actually existed, we would have probably found his other poems also. In addition, Madan has claimed that Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, editor of *Sarasvati*, himself nursed a bias against Dalit literature. If he was a litterateur in the real sense then he would respond to or at least consider the literary discourse of Swami Acchutanand because both were contemporaries.[49]

II

Establishment of Printing Presses

The first Dalit booklet was published by Swami Acchutanand in 1913 from Agra. This was printed in a non-Dalit press. Swami Acchutanand persistently urged the establishment of Dalit printing presses where Dalit literature could be publish.[50] The establishment of a printing press was not easy task. It required a lot of money. Dalit intellectuals were not fortunate to enough find generous patrons like Babu Shivaprasad Gupta and Ramananda Chatterjee to fund their publication ventures.[51] Nevertheless, some printing presses were established by Dalits even in those days.

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[47] Kanwal Bharti; "Dalit Chetna Ka Pratham Kavi: Hira Dom Ya Acchutanand" (First Poet of Dalit Awareness: Hira Dom or Acchutanand), in S.S. Bechain & D. Chaubey (ed), Chintan Ki Parampara aur Dalit Sahitya (Tradition of Thinking and Dalit Literature) Hazaribagh: Navlekhan Prakashan, 2001, p. 152

[48] Sheoraj Singh Bechain; Hindi Ki Dalit Patrakarita Par Patrakar Ambedkar Ka Prabhav (Impact of Journalist Ambedkar on Dalit Journalism of Hindi) New Delhi: Samta Prakashan, 1997

[49] Guru Prasad Madan; "Hira Dom Se Pahle Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' Evam Unke Samakalin Dalit Sahityakar", (Before Hira Dom Swami Acchutanand 'Harihar' and His Contemporary Dalit Litterateurs) paper presented in a seminar entitled 'Samkalin Bhartiya Sahitya Mein Samajik Nyay Ki Avdharna: Vishesh Sandarbh Dalit Sahitya' at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on 14-16 November, 2007

[50] Guru Prasad Madan, Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[51] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002,p. 58

The Nishad Printing Press of Lucknow of 1920 was the first such instance. Babu Ramcharan set up this press and launched a newspaper '*Nishad Samachar*' fully devoted to the interests of the Nishad community of Lucknow in 1920. The aim of the foundation of this press was to infuse new blood into the Nishad community and raise awareness among them.[52] '*Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya*' (Original Inhabitants of India and Arya), the famous booklet by Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer, was published from this Nishad Printing Press in 1930. Another printing press was set up by Swami Acchutanand in Kanpur in 1925. He asked for financial co-operation from his community members. He published his newspaper '*Adi Hindu*' from this press.[53] Munshi Hariprasad Tamta established a printing press in Almora to publish his newspaper '*Samta*' in 1934.

However, a more drastic change had to wait until the establishment of a publication house by Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu in Lucknow in 1937. At this stage, he had no means yet to instal an independent printing press. Before that, Jigyasu had been working as a proof reader with the Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow. He worked there for eighteen years. Later, he spent some time with Dularelal Bhargav's *Madhuri* magazine as a proof reader.[54] But he was not satisfied with his job because it left him with no time to write, which he dearly craved. [55] In this state of mind, he met Swami Acchutanand in 1926. Their alliance was cemented with the publication of '*Mool-Bharatvasi Aur Arya*' in 1930. This was written by Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer and edited by Jigyasu. Swami Acchutanand continuously inspired Jigyasu to write on the Adi Hindu principles and establish a press for the publication of the Adi Hindu literature. In 1937, Jigyasu founded a publication center at his house in Saadatganj in Lucknow under the name of Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau.

The name suggested that this center was mandated to disseminating knowledge about Adi Hindu ideology. Social movements and circumstances played an important role in shaping the future of this publication house. During 1945-47 and in the post independence period, Jigyasu had genuinely felt that the discriminatory mentality of caste Hindus could be reformed. Therefore, he changed the name of his publication house as Hindu Samaj Sudhar

[52] Personal interview with Nand Lal Verma, Grandson of Babu Ramcharan, (age 78), Lucknow on 25 February, 2008 at 5.00 pm
[53] Guru Prasad Madan, Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969
[54] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Sankshipt Parichya (A Short Autobiography), Lucknow, 1962
[55] Dr. Angane Lal and Dr. Rahul Raj; Uttar Pradesh me Dalit Andolan (Dalit Movement in Uttar Pradesh), Delhi: Gautam Book Center, 2011, p. 39

Karyalaya. But he was disappointed to find that there was no possibility of changing the discriminatory mentality of caste Hindus. Therefore, it was renamed as Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan in 1962.[56] He set up a printing press, Samaj Seva Press, at Lucknow in 1957. He wrote to many for financial help. He wrote a letter to Mahashya Bhikhulal to send him Rs. 150. His son Guru Prasad Madan sent him money.[57] This publication center played a crucial role in the proliferation of the Dalit perspective in print, especially after the conversion of Dr. Ambedkar to Buddhism in 1956. For many years, it remained the sole publisher of Dalit literature in the province. It survived partly because Jigyasu was himself devoted to the publication of Dalit booklets and he invested his money without any hope of profit. His sole objective was to spread the philosophy of Swami Acchutanand and Dr. Ambedkar.

Another printing press, Ashok Jhinjhak Press, was established by Lalayee Singh Yadav in his village Jhinjhak in Kanpur district in 1958.[58] He was the president of the district unit of Republication Party of India (RPI) in 1961. Therefore, along with the publication of booklets, this center was fully engaged in the publication of election leaflets and pamphlets of the RPI. Many famous booklets like '*Bamanwadi Rajya me Shoshiton par Rajnaitik Dacoity*', (Political Dacoity on Oppressed in the Brahmanical State), '*Aryon Ka Natik Pol Prakash*' (Disclosing Moral Secrets of the Aryans), etc. were published by this center. In 1986, it was transferred to Jhakarkati in Kanpur city. It is still publishing popular booklets related to Buddhism. J.N. Aditya is looks after it at the moment. [59]

Although, these presses printed Dalit literature, their number was small. They simply had no wherewithal to publish the entire corps of Dalit writing. This problem was compounded especially after independence, following the emergence of a new crop of Dalit writers. Among the above-mentioned presses, only one (in Almora) was working, the rest of the presses closed down due to financial problems. Not every Dalit writer and intellectual was gifted with the means or the position to establish new printing presses. Therefore, they

[56] Personal interview with Avinash Kumar (age 53), grandson of Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu on 25 February 2008, at 4.00 pm. (These dates are based on the available booklets, which are published by this center. Avinsh Kumar is unable to tell the exact dates regarding the history of this center. This publication center is still producing Dalit literature but they closed down their own 'Letter Printing Press' after the introduction of new press technology because it gives better results at a reasonable price. He is looking after this publication center since 1973.)
[57] Telephonic interview with Guru Prasad Madan, (age 69) Allahabad on 24 June, 2012, 1.23 pm
[58] Personal interview with J.N. Aditya from Jhakarkati, Kanpur on 22 February, 2008 at 11.00 am & Telephonic interview with Guru Prasad Madan, (age 70) Allahabad on 24 June, 2012, 1.23 pm
[59] Personal interview with J.N. Aditya from Jhakarkati, Kanpur on 22 February, 2008 at 11.00 am.

had no choice left: they had to go to non-Dalit printing presses to print their literature. This was not an easy task for them because mainstream or big publication centers were reluctant to publish them. The untouchable intelligentsia approached non-Dalit printing presses in their localities but usually they faced very strong opposition from caste Hindus when they read their manuscripts. Sometimes, they were beaten up or their manuscripts were burnt or destroyed. For instance, the manuscript of Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant's '*Panchayati Samaj'* was destroyed in Lucknow; while Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar's manuscript of '*Hamara Panchayati Samaj*' was burned and he was manhandled in Lucknow in the 1960s.[60] Such obstructions were rationalized on the ground that the literature exposed the exploitative, suppressive and discriminatory nature of caste Hindus. It was ironical indeed that a large portion of caste Hindus considered it their social and religious right to exploit the low castes.

Various Genres of Publication

Francesca Orsini examines the development of the Hindi public sphere through "three main platforms – journals, books, and *Kavi Sammelans* (poets' assemblies). In these 'arenas' writers, poets, and scholars made their work public, and came face to face with Hindi literature from different tastes and persuasions. The first two were a direct product of the modern print culture, while the poetry meetings were a traditional form of literary entertainment, which acquired new dimensions with the spread of nationalism and of Hindi activism."[61] The Dalit print space did not expand through similar platforms. Although Dalit intellectuals started their own journals, magazines, and newspapers, their number was small and many of these had very brief lives, one or two years on an average. It was not easy for them to launch monthly or by-weekly magazines or journals because it required a well established office, printing press, staff and other resources. Their finances simply could not meet those requirements. Therefore, they concentrated on writing small booklets, occasionally rather massive or huge books or launching journals. If the mainstream Hindi public sphere was distinguished by its regularity, consistency and periodicity, the Dalit print world sparked off and on like fireflies, and throbbed with occasional bursts of immense energy and passion, structurally handicapped as they were with limited patronage and resource crunch.

[60] Personal interviews with Dharamvijay, son of Dr. G.P. Prashant, (age 40), Unnao on 26 February, 2007 at 5.00 pm and Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Lucknow on 24 February, 2008 at 2.00 pm

[61] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 52

Poets' assemblies were not very popular among Dalits but Dalit gatherings were prevalent among them. For instance, Swami Acchutanand used meetings to spread political awakening. Typically, Adi Hindu *Bhajans* and poem recitations preceded the meetings and street plays or drama succeeded them. Acchutanand's play '*Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan*' was staged more than 300 times during his life time.[62] This difference in the respective modes of circulation can be productively related to the respective objectives of these two streams of consciousness. The aim of Dalit literature was different from that of the mainstream Hindi literature. The basic agenda of Dalit literature lay in the negation of Brahmanical literature and the development of a counter-literature. This literature was aimed to create "a cultural renaissance consciousness among Dalit readers."[63]

Orsini argues, while talking about the importance of journals, that in the initial stage of the mainstream Hindi public sphere, many writers, from "Harischandra in Benares to Balkrishna Bhatt in Allahabad, from Pratapnarayan Misra in Kanpur to Balmukund Gupta in Calcutta, founded at least one journal. The avowed purpose of these one-man efforts was not commercial but to 'serve Hindi'. Most, if not all, of the Hindi writings of the 1920s and 1930s appeared first in the journals, and the great majority of Hindi writers were, at least for some time in their lives, professional editors. Already, the nineteenth century pioneers of Hindi in UP had grasped the importance of journals as a medium to foster the use of Hindi as a public language, to circulate ideas and initiate discussion on matter of social and cultural reforms, and take literature beyond the closed circle of connoisseurs-friends to a not-yet-too-clearly defined 'Hindu-Hindu readership'.[64] *Sarasvati* (Allahabad), *Indu* (Benares), *Madhuri* (Lucknow) played an important role in the making of the Hindi public sphere. *Sarasvati* was known for its chaste, literary Hindi, while *Madhuri* differed from *Sarasvati* in one crucial respect: in its openness. Without the moralist and reformist mould that Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi had cast *Sarasvati* in, without a definite agenda, and with a more commercial orientation, it lent its pages to a much greater variety of voices and styles. It tried to reflect on contemporary public opinion rather than mould it. Though in outlook *Madhuri* did not differ substantially from its predecessor, it showed how openness alone made all the difference."[65]

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[62] Guru Prasad Madan, Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Jivan Aur Krititva, (Swami Acchutanand Harihar: Life and Works), unpublished manuscript, Allahabad, 1969

[63] Badri Narayan; "Heroes, Histories and Booklets", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.36, No. 41, 2001, p. 3925

[64] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 52

[65] Ibid., pp. 54-55

No such mechanism was around to enrich the Dalit print world. There was not much reformism in the discourse of the Dalit literature. They did not, could not, work out a standard frame in terms of what and which kinds of topics or issues and standard of language were necessary for their publications. Rather, at the stage, they expected every educated Dalits to write and publish his 'knowledge'. It was considered their duty to initiate discourses on social and economic reforms and spread awareness regarding their political rights. Nonetheless, in one respect Dalit intellectuals had a similarity with *Madhuri*: in their eclecticism, they opened their pages to all kinds of articles or booklets.

Expanding the Horizon of Literature

According to Orsini, the literary sphere which "Hindi writers entered in the 1920s and 1930s had expended considerably, when compared with the previous decades: the rise of a popular press, fuelled by the expansion in 'vernacular' education and by events such as the First World War, the resultant economic crises and the new nationalist drive towards popular politicization, contributed to the growth of a publishing market and a literary public wider than ever before. This expansion finally validated the notion, current since the mid-nineteenth century, that writers were the 'vanguard of the people', who were, at the same time, dependant on the general public both for their authority and their livelihood."[66] Dalit print culture also grew. The expansion took place after independence. There were two prominent reasons for this. First, in spite of independence from the British rule, Dalits remained subjugated under the tyrannical rule of caste Hindus. Second, the State proved unable to secure them political, economic and social security and rights. The consequent frustration encouraged Dalits to demonstrate their anguish and dissatisfaction through their writings.

Language and Printing Materials

The question of language in the mainstream Hindi literature was very important. As I have argued earlier, M.P. Dvivedi took the initiative to standardize Hindi. Later on, many Hindi writers followed in his footprints. At that time, a movement to recognize Hindi as the national language was also started. Dalit writers were not restricted by such status concerns for their language per se; for them it was a vehicle through which to increase 'awareness' of

[66] Ibid., p. 30

their people. The message, and not the medium, was their major concern, although they confessed to preferring Hindi on account of its simplicity and accessibility. They usually say in the '*preface*' and '*acknowledgment*' of their writings that they choose the simple language for their work, since they require that their work be accessible to all, especially Dalits."[67] Another reason was that a simple language created an interest in reading.

It must be noted that Dalit booklets do not boast of an attractive get up, print or glossy paper, as is customary in the contemporary consumerist and capital oriented publishing market. In fact, their layout, get up and print has generally been substandard.[68] It is very difficult to access these booklets in their original version because these were published on '*akhbari'* or cheap paper, which would be damaged after a limited period. [69] Badri Narayan argued that the "distinctive features of the Dalit literature are simplicity, receptivity and acceptability."[70] Dalit authors worked with very limited resources. More importantly, their targeted readership was also poor and could hardly afford expensive books. By default, they had to choose *akhbari* paper for their literature. However, a change occurred in Dalit publications since the 1990s. They were very concerned with the glossy or good quality paper. Therefore, some publication houses like the Samyak Prakashan, Delhi, which pays special attention to printing paper quality, design and get up of booklets. As a result, prices of their booklets are slightly higher than that of earlier Dalit booklets.

Price of Booklets

The cost of the booklets was a major factor determining the wide reach of Dalit literature. It is important to note that many times, in pre-independence and post-independence periods, instead of a cash price, Dalit writers assessed investment in such booklets in terms of 'service of fraternity', 'unity among low castes' and 'contribution in mission for upliftment of the Adi Hindus'. They considered their writings as a part of 'mission' to awaken their ignorant people. For example, Dalit writer Ram Sajivan says in the *preface* of his booklet, "I

[67] Badloo Ram Sonkar; Maha Prabhu Ravidas ka Chamatkar (Wonders of Great God Ravidas), Kanpur: Jai Bheem Sahitya Mattha, 1949, p. 2 (translation mine from Hindi)
[68] Badri Narayan; Documenting Dissent: Contesting Fables, Contested Memories and Dalit Political Discourse, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2001, p. 110
[69] Badri Narayan; Women Heroes and Dalit Assertion in North India: Culture, Identity and Politics, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2006, p. 56
[70] Badri Narayan; The Making of the Dalit Public in North India, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 72

do not need money from this booklet. Because of Dr. Ambedkar, I have been able to read and receive education. I am following the humane religion by preaching his greatness and pious words to the common person. This is really a precious asset for me."[71]

However, prices were always kept at the minimum, which would be affordable for common people. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the average price of the booklets was from one *anna* to 4 *annas*, sometimes less than 1 anna, and more than 12 annas.[72] After the 1960s, the prices were increased from 10 paise to 50 paise and sometimes more than 1 to 5 rupees. The objective was not to make profits but to ensure the widest possible distribution of their literature. This literature was not available in common bookstalls or shops. Caste Hindu booksellers were not ready to sell this literature because it was against their belief about Hinduism. In these circumstances, Dalit writers themselves distributed their literature and sometimes people came to their houses or publication centers for buying booklets and newspapers.[73] Dalit literature was sold at various Dalits fairs on celebration of birth anniversaries of Ravidas, Swami Acchutanand and Ambedkar. Badri Narayan says that these booklets were also sold in political rallies by Dalit leaders of the Republican Party of India (RPI) and later of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).[74] A most interesting byproduct of such modes of quasi private, personal and non commercial modes of circulation is the direct contact between the writer and his readers which mainstream Hindi literature neither aimed at nor managed to achieve. This personal and direct contact was a consequence of financial limitations, but it must have also strengthened interpersonal and community solidarity in ways that need to be fully explored.

Financial Limitations

Financial hardship was not an exclusive problem of Dalits; many mainstream Hindi writers had been struggling with it almost as much. In 1942, Vrijender Gaur, a non-Dalit

[71] Ram Sajivan; Bhagwan Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar (God Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar), Allahabad: Ambedkar Seva Sadan, 1973, p. 2 (translation mine from Hindi)
[72] Swami Baudhanand Mahasthaveer's Mool Bharatvasi Aur Arya had price 13 annas. It was due to its massive informative size which was relevant to present the various dimensions of the Adi Hindu ideology.
[73] Personal interviews with Guru Prasad Madan, writer and publisher, (age 65) Allahabad on February 20, 2007 at 9.30 am; Avinash Kumar, publisher, Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow on 4 June, 2008 at 11.30 am; J.N. Aditya, publisher, Ashok Pustakalaya, Kanpur on 23 February, 2008 at 11.00 am; A.R. Akella, publisher, Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00 pm.
[74] Badri Narayan; The Making of the Dalit Public in North India, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 74

writer, says that "the time of Tulsidas, Kalidas has gone when every writer was honoured by the State. Now there are three types of writers in Hindi. The first group of writers is wealthy; in the second group writers who are writing for fame and can publish their work their own. The third group may be called *Shramjivi* (living on hard work). Financial hardship is main problem of *Shramjivi* writers. They seek to publish so that their family receives some food."[75] Famous Hindi writer Yashpal[76] also shared his views with Gaur. He said that "the life of Hindi writers is located at a very low economic level. He always finds that even well versed writers are running after wealthy patrons. He did not find any Hindi writers who are living a happy life on the strength of royalty from their books."[77]

Dalit writers too faced economic hardship. Typically, they were usually teachers, advocates, homeopathic doctors, clerks, and social activists and so on. Therefore, they did not earn enough support their writing and publication ventures. Often enough, they were unable to fulfill the legitimate demands of their family but somehow managed to collect money for the publications.[78] After independence, many academics and government officers joined the Dalit literary movement. For example, Angane Lal was a professor of history at the University of Lucknow and later on he became the Vice Chancellor of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Awadh University in UP. Nevertheless, in general, financial adversity has almost always restrained the development of Dalit literature.

Because of the financial constraints, they regularly requested their brethren for financial support to publish their writings. For instance, Swami Acchutanand had sought co-operation from his community and asked his people to become subscribers for his magazine *Acchut* and his newspaper *Adi Hindu*. Although there were a few community organizations that provided them with help, these were rarely sufficient for the continued publication of

[75] Vrijender Gaur: "Hindi Lekhakon ki Aarthik Samasya" (Economic Problem of Hindi Writers) in Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 21, Part 1, No. 1, August, 1942, NMML, p. 128 (translation mine from Hindi)
[76] He was a friend of Bhagat Singh. He was an active member of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. After the death of Chandrashekar Azad, he was arrested and sent to prison. In 1937, the Congress Government in UP released him. After that, he started writing novels, stories in Hindi.
[77] Vrijender Gaur: "Hindi Lekhakon ki Aarthik Samasya" (Economic Problem of Hindi Writers) in Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 21, Part 1, No. 1, August, 1942, NMML, pp. 128-29 (translation mine from Hindi)
[78] Personal interviews with many Dalit writers and publishers like Guru Prasad Madan, Allahabad (20 February, 2007); Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Lucknow (24 February, 2008); A.R. Akella, Aligarh (5 June 8, 2008); K. Nath, Kanpur (22 February, 2008).

these journals.[79] Jigyasu's two booklets were published with the financial help of Rs. 470 by Goganram Chandor (an untouchable) from Rohtak district, Punjab, in 1937.[80] He was also assisted by Mahashya Bhikhulal in establishing a printing press. Ram Sajivan's booklet on Dr. Ambedkar was published with the support of the Ambedkar Seva Sadan at Allahabad in 1973.[81]

The economic problems could be solved if Dalit journals, magazines and booklets got adequate advertisements. They could not attract the advertisement agencies because these journals were hostile towards caste Hindus and the circulation of their literature was limited to particular sections of the society. However, there were some instances of advertisements that came from the low castes but it could not achieve that popularity and status which '*Sarasvati'* and '*Madhuri*' had in the mainstream media.[82] For instance, there were 32 additional pages of advertisements in *Sarasvati* in January, 1923.[83] In *Madhuri*, a total of 26 companies or traders had given their advertisements in August 1940.[84]

Distribution and Readership

In the pre-independence period, the average number of printed copies for each booklet was 500 to 2500. Generally, the size of a booklet was around 16 to 40 pages. Sometimes it crossed this limit like 200 to 250 pages in a single booklet. It depended on the content of booklets. Swami Baudhanand's '*Mool Bharatvasi Aur Arya*' contains more than 250 pages. On the other hand, the length of Swami Acchutanand's booklets was usually limited to 16 to 24 pages. In the post-independence period, the number of copies has increased to 5000 and often exceeded that ceiling too. Even the average number of pages and length has increased

[79] Personal interview with Guru Prasad Madan, writer and publisher, (age 70) Allahabad on January 31, 2012 at 9.30 am
[80] Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu; Bhartiya Moulik Samajvaad: Srishti Aur Manav Samaj Ka Vikas Athava 'Bharat Ke Adi – Nivasi' Granth ka Pratham Khand (Indian Socialism: Development of Universe and Human society or First Part of the Text 'Original Inhabitants of India'), Lucknow: Adi Hindu Gyan Prasarak Bureau, 1941, pp. 277-78
[81] Ram Sajivan; Bhagwan Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar (God Baba Bheemrao Ambedkar), Allahabad: Ambedkar Seva Sadan, 1973, p. 2
[82] Francesca Orsini; The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 58
[83] Sarasvati (Hindi Journal, Allahabad), Vol. 24, Part 1, No. 1, January 1923, NMML
[84] Madhuri (Hindi Journal, Lucknow), Vol. 19, Part 1, No. 1, August, 1940, NMML

from 30 to 60 pages. At the same time, some booklets had only 8 to 16 pages. This approach depended solely on the finances of the writers and publishers. On the other hand, in mainstream literature, there was no limitation on pages or the size of books and journals. It was because, there was no dearth of economic resources.

The mechanism of publication and distribution of Dalit literature was a very complex issue, because they fundamentally differed from the traditional marketing system prevalent in the mainstream Hindi public sphere. In mainstream literature, publication houses took the responsibly of publication and distribution. They also provided for royalties to the writers. But Dalit intellectuals have had to bear all the responsibilities from writing to the distribution themselves. Their booklets were not sold on the bookstalls in the cities or villages. It was the responsibility of the author to propagate his booklets. Sometimes, the author has to send the booklets by post and some time readers come to his house. Dalit writers were not offered any royalties. Rather they had to pay for the cost of publication and distribution.

The circulation of these booklets was very high. The popularity of the booklets relating to historical themes has been greater than that of other booklets. '*Poona Pact Banam Gandhi'*, '*Bharat Ke Adi-Nivasiyon Ki Sabhyata'*, *'Eklavya Natak'*, *'Ram Rajya Nyaya Natak Shambook Muni Balidan*', are some of the popular booklets, which have sold more than 50,000 copies in the period under study.[85]

We find a unique situation in the Dalit print world, which had been evolving and developing in response to as well as in contradistinction with the mainstream Hindi public sphere. Dalit intellectuals self confessedly took upon themselves the responsibility of 'paying back to society' because it was their society which made them cultured, sociable and literate. Therefore, it was their moral responsibility to lift their society out of ignorance and open the path of emancipation from mental slavery. They displayed no ambition for literary fame and their sole aim was to spread consciousness among their caste brethren.

[85] Personal interviews with Avinash Kumar, publisher, Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan, Lucknow on 4 June, 2008 at 11.30 am; J.N. Aditya, publisher, Ashok Pustakalaya, Kanpur on 23 February, 2008 at 11.00 am, A.R. Akella, publisher, Anand Sahitya Sadan, Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00 pm. (these booklets has been reprinted more than 10 times.)

Conclusion

Dalit print culture went through many phases. At the initial stage, it evolved as a counter public sphere as against mainstream Hindi literature. Writers of the mainstream Hindi public sphere came mainly from the upper castes. Their writings about Dalits were a result of sympathy and of *Hridya Privartan*. They described the pathetic conditions of Dalits and their exploitation. But they hardly focused on the political rights of untouchables. They were very keen on elevating Hindi to the status of a national language. But there are no instances of including the contemporary Dalit intellectuals who were continuously publishing their Hindi writings for the development of community and nation.

Mechanism of literature played a crucial role in its wide circulation. Mainstream Hindi literature was benefitted with that while Dalit literature faced many problems. Dalit intellectuals started to write their ideas from the second decade of the twentieth century. Swami Acchutanand felt that to intensify Dalit literary movement, Dalits should have their own printing presses. However, some printing presses were established but these were closed down due to financial problems. Despite this, Dalit literature was popular among Dalit readers. It can be infer from ten to fifteen times reprints of many booklets. Dalit writers are still writing. Nowadays Dalit literature is aimed to establish a casteless society.

Conclusion

Koi na kisi ko Neech kahe,
Janata se door vishamata ho.
Ho nyaya sabo ke sang eksa,
Insaaf yahi hai Samata ho.[1]

No one can say 'low' [castes] to anyone, inequality [should] be removed from public./ Justice should be delivered equally to all, justice means that equality [should] prevail./[2]

Equality is a necessary phenomenon for the existence of every human being. By existence, I mean the preservation of dignity together with the protection and promotion of an individual's self-respect. The importance of this phenomenon can be very well anticipated from the various caste movements that have taken place in India. In the background of these numerous caste movements, a special mention of Dalit movements is imperative as the core demand of such movements has always been for equal treatment at par with the higher section of the society. In case of north India, the Dalit movement started in the second decade of the twentieth century. Swami Acchutanand played yeoman's role in this movement. He propounded the theory of the original inhabitants of India. For that purpose, he also inscribed a notion of the glorious history of the original inhabitants. According to him, the Adi Hindus had thriving civilization and kingdoms. But they were defeated by the conspiracies and mal-practices of the Aryans. As a consequent, they were reduced to the slavery under Brahmanical order.

To attain the knowledge of their glorious history, Dalit intelligentsia underwent a modern change: acquiring education. According to Brahmanical texts, the untouchables were denied basic education. They could only take their professional education, which helped them to earn their 'livelihood'. The arrival of the British rule became a turning point in the history of untouchables. It was for the first time, after destruction of their glorious civilization, when they were considered as human beings. The British government opened the door of knowledge for them.

[1] Pamphlet issued by Untouchable castes, 9 November. (year is not mentioned, it was around 1950)
[2] Translation mine from Hindi

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, various government and non-government agencies opened the doors of educational system for the untouchables and the 'low castes'. The journey of acquiring education was not a smooth sailing for untouchables. In the initial stage, they were denied admission due to pressure of caste Hindus. But the missions' and military schools played an important role to end the disparity of education. First generation of Dalit intelligentsia was educated mainly in the military and missions' schools.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, a significant change took place. As Nandini Gooptu pointed out that the untouchables went to cities for the search of work. This helped in the development of a tiny 'middle class' among untouchables in cities. They were living outside the social and religious pressure of village life. Therefore, somehow they were free from their village counterpart. It provided a base for the revival of *Bhakti* tradition among the urban untouchables which encouraged them to think about the establishment of an egalitarian society and the abolition of the caste system.

To establish an egalitarian society, the Dalit intelligentsia found a 'unique' weapon: Dalit literature. The first generation of Dalit intellectuals was equipped with the power of writing and they started a counter literary discourse against the mainstream Hindi literature in UP. Swami Acchutanand, Babu Ramcharan, Choudhary Nand Lal, Munshi Hariprasad Tamta, Mahashya Bhikhulal, Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', Dr. Gaya Prasad 'Prashant', Sundarlal Sagar, Ramanarayana Yadavendu, Jatav Vir Manikchand, Guru Prasad Madan, etc. were some of the prominent intellectuals who registered their presence in the literary public sphere. Through their writings, they tried to create awareness among the ignorant untouchables and low castes. These Dalit intellectuals came from diverse backgrounds but a commonality that united them was a feeling and understanding of their subjugated position within Hindu social order. All intellectuals were in agreement that communal rivalries, caste feuds and primitive acts of oppressions and suppressions committed by orthodox Hindus had been responsible for their degradation. Therefore, they began their struggle for establishment of an egalitarian society based on merits of human beings where they could live with self- respect and dignity.

Swami Acchutanand was the first Dalit writer in the Hindi speaking region. He opened the door of literary world for the deprived sections. He initiated a campaign for emancipation of masses from the stigma of untouchability and slavery through his writings. Dalit intellectuals shared their solidarity with the Adi Hindu movement which led to the beginning of a new ideological and literary discourse that guided them to imagine a glorious communal past and a united collective 'self'.[3] In this process of imagining and re-construction of their history, they discovered their heroes in Brahmanical literature. It is important to point out that they took Brahmanical myths for an authentic history and re-interpreted them according to the needs of their movement. No doubt, they did. But they were very deliberate in their selection, because of their awareness of the fact that it was only the Brahmanical texts which actually rule the low castes. Therefore, in fact, they did not have any choice for re-construction of their history.

Dalit intellectuals emphasized 'historical' themes in order to reclaim the 'actual history' of their 'glorious past' distorted by Brahmanical discourses, which could instill a new sense of self-respect and dignity in the Dalit community. They discovered heroes like Shambook, Eklavya, Bali, Mayanand, Raidas, Jhalkaribai, and Ambedkar to portray their centuries long struggle for liberation from Brahmanical Hinduism.

Dalit intellectuals started the process of a new identity formation on two levels: socio-religious and political. Except for the Jatavs of Agra, Dalit intellectuals utilized their subversive literary discourse to create a new identity outside the Brahmanical framework by rechristening themselves as Adi Hindus. On the contrary, the Jatavs of Agra searched their new identity within the caste system and tried to rise within its framework. They claimed for the Kshatriya status and were significantly assisted in this endeavour by the Arya Samaj in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

On the second level, Dalits worked for recognition of their separate political identity. It is noticeable that despite various programmes of the Congress and

[3] Sekhar Bandyopadhyay; Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal 1872-1947, Surrey: Curzen Press, 1997, p. 4

Gandhi's championing of cause for the untouchables no substantial change occurred in their situation. Dalits opposed the Congress and declared it as an organization of caste Hindus. Dalit intellectuals remained on the fringes of nationalist discourse and it is important that they were not ready to accept the leadership of caste Hindus and of the Congress for their uplift. To them the new Indian 'nation' was merely a fabrication of upper castes. There was no scope for the participation of 'low castes' in the newly formed 'democratic republic'. They were convinced that nationalist slogan of 'nation for all' was a mere tactic of caste Hindus to confuse the deprived sections. Therefore, they intensified their literary initiatives to mobilize them for their emancipation from Hinduism.

In the Poona Pact, Dalits were characterized as a separate identity, distinct from the caste Hindus. Therefore, they were given some 'political rights'. But the Pact was not able to bring any substantive change in their political situation. Rather it helped caste Hindus to minimize the scope of political development of Dalits. During the elections of 1937 and 1946, the Pact remained unsuccessful to protect the political rights of Dalits. Rather, as Shankranand Shastri and Purusottam Dass Kureel claimed, it encouraged puppet Dalit leadership for the Congress.

However, the British government recognized Dalits as a separate element in the national life of India in the August Offer in 1940. Ambedkar and others founded a political organization the All India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF) in 1942 to fulfill their aim. But the Congress and Gandhi never accepted the demand of the AISCF. Further, the Cabinet Mission also declined their demand. As a result, AISCF launched a country-wide Satyagraha in 1946. The striking features of this Satyagraha were its peaceful nature and the participation of Dalit women. It was claimed in the Congress Satyagrahas were the most non-violent in its nature. But whether it was the Non-Cooperation movement or the 'August Disturbance', they were not free from violence. The participation of Dalit women confirmed that awareness had penetrated equally well among the men and women alike and that was the most important part of their movement.

On 15 August, 1947, India got independence. Very soon, Dalits realized that their independence was yet to come. No visible changes could be traced in the casteist

mentality of caste Hindus even after independence. Atrocities on Dalits were growing in so-called independent India. Dalits were poorly represented in the government jobs, private sectors, and the Cabinets. The feeling of dissatisfaction was growing among Dalits. This helped the Dalit literary movement. We found that after independence, Dalit writers started emerging everywhere from big cities to small villages. It was the time when Dalit educated people wanted to pen their experience and wished to awaken and enlighten their illiterate and literate masses who had lived under subjugation since centuries. Therefore, ~~a~~ proliferation of Dalit print started to occur since the beginning of 1950s.

Dalit print culture was very repetitive in one respect i.e. these are full of narratives of exploitation and deprivation of the low castes. It seems that the Dalit intellectuals realized that the primary aim of their literature should be to make their community realize the extent and nature of their exploitation and deprivation because such a realization is a pre-requisite of any movement for social justice. But at the same time, the centuries old Brahmanical cultural hegemony also limited the boundaries of their imagination. They could not but imagine their past and future within the ideological framework of the Brahmanical order. This was due in no small measure to the pervasive cultural hegemony of Brahmanical order.[4] Therefore, in their historical narratives we hardly find any act of rebellion against the Brahmanical order. Their talk of the abolition of Brahmanical order was rather limited to the replacement of Brahmanical rule by the Adi Hindu rule. The king and subject relationship remained in place as usual. But there was a difference, Adi Hindu rule was based on a democratic pattern. Their women were considered equally important for the development of society and politics which was absent in the Brahmanical order.

In the course of discussion, I have also tried to compare the Dalit literary movement with mainstream Hindi literature. In the early decades of the twentieth century, upper caste Hindi writers, including Premchand, were praised for writing for the Dalit cause. It was claimed that they really wanted to accept the 'unfortunate' untouchables into the mainstream. In the course of exploration, it has come out that their literature was written in sympathy. They wanted 'reforms' in the conditions of

[4] Ibid., p. 3

untouchables but they did not ask for real 'change'. They raised the question of temple entry and tried to establish it as a strong means for their uplift. But soon, Dalits understood the 'hidden' agenda of this movement and they decided to abandon it. The writings of upper caste Hindu writers are reflective of their wish to re-establish 'values' of Brahmanical system. Therefore, they never asked for the abolition of the Varna order and inter-caste marriage, which Ambedkar considered as a strong means to annihilate the caste system. Their love for untouchables was limited to removal of untouchability only. It is very strange that they were writing on issues of Dalits. But there were hardly any Dalit writers who published in their literary forum. As Guru Prasad Madan argues mainstream litterateurs were full of conscious and unconscious prejudices against untouchables. At best, they represented Dalits as victims but not as agents.

It is worth noting that while writers belonging to the mainstream Hindi public sphere turned professional writers after some time, the case of Dalit writers was entirely opposite; writing for them was in the form of a responsibility towards the society. There is a long list of Dalit writers who are continuing the legacy of their ancestors in the literary world. They are continuously writing and publishing on various issues related to their lives. Earlier untouchables had no right to raise their voice publicly but now educated untouchables are disseminating their knowledge by taking advantage of the modern print media technology.

To finally conclude it can be said, that the Dalit print culture prepared Dalits to threaten the Brahmanic hegemony with their literature. It provided the base for their self-assertion, protest and mobilization. Further, it encouraged them to raise their level of literacy which was particularly low among them. After attaining education, according to Ambedkar, their aim was to become united and then initiate their struggle. Ambedkar said that "politics is not a matter of short cut. One has to take a long way to capture power."[5] The Dalit literary movement took a long time to spread awareness among Dalits and therefore, as a result, a Dalit finally captured political power in 1995 in the most populated state of India i.e. UP.

[5] The Leader (English, Allahabad), Tuesday, October 16, 1956, p. 5

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Personal Interview

Agra

Bhagat Singh Raka (editor of Raka Toofan newspaper), from Agra, 25 February, 2008 at 4.00 pm.

Sudir Sagar, Grandson of Sundarlal Sagar, (age 56), Agra on 26 February, 2008 at 6.15 pm

Sunil Sagar, Grandson of Sundarlal Sagar, (age 52), Agra on 26 February, 2008 at 6.15 pm

Doli Devi, Great Granddaughter of Ramanarayan Yadavendu (age 28), Agra on 26 February, 2008 at 10.30 am.

Daya Shankar (age 66), Buddhist writer, Agra, on April 26, 2008, at Vasntkunj, New Delhi at 10.30 am. & in Agra, on 5 June, 2008, at 10.30 am.

Allahabad

Guru Prasad Madan, Dalit writer and publisher, (age 67) Allahabad on February 20, 2007 at 9.30 am; on 21 February, 2007, 5pm; on 2 June, 2008 at 10.00pm; on February 21, 2011, 5.00 p.m; on January 30, 2012 at 7:30 am

Brij Lal (age 70), Grandson of Choudhary Nand Lal, Allahabad on 21 February, 2008 at 10.00 am.

Dr. Badri Narayan, non-Dalit intellectual, Dalit Resource Centre, Govind Ballabh Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad on 30 May, 2008 at 4.00 pm.

Aligarh

A.R. Akella, Dalit writer and publisher (age 58), Aligarh on 5 June, 2008 at 3.00pm.

Kanpur

R.C. Kureel, (age 52) General Secretary of 'Shri 108 Swami Acchutanand Smarak Smiti', Kanpur, UP on 22 February, 2008 at 10.00 am.

J.N. Aditya, Dalit writer and publisher, Jhakarkati, Kanpur on 22 February, 2008 at 11.00 am.

K. Nath, (age 55) Dalit writer and publisher, Kanpur on 22 February, 2008 at 3.00 pm.

Koushambi

Prof. Angane Lal, Dalit writer, Ajuha Bazar, Koushambi, on 8 June, 2006 at 10.00 am.

Dr. Bare Lal, friend of Guru Prasad Madan, Ajuha Bazar, Koushambhi, on 22 February, 2008 at 10.00 am.

Lucknow

Rajvaidya Mata Prasad 'Sagar', (Age 79), Dalit writer, Lucknow, on 24th February, 2008 at 2.00 pm.

Avinash Kumar, grandson of Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, (age 53) Lucknow on 25 February 2008 at 4.00 pm.
Nand Lal Verma, Grandson of Babu Ramcharan, (age 78), Lucknow on 25 February, 2008 at 5.00 pm.

Unnao

Dharamvijay, son of Dr. G.P. Prashant, (age 40), Unnao on 26 February, 2007 at 5.00 pm

Telephonic interview

Guru Prasad Madan, (age 67) Dalit writer and publisher, Allahabad on 28 April, 2008, 8.15 am
& on 5 April, 2008, 9.00 pm.
& on 12 June, 2008, 10.00 pm.
& on 12 September, 2011, 10.00 pm.

A.R. Akella, (age 58), Dalit writer and publisher, Aligarh on 12 June, 2008 at 10.00 am.

Advocate Sundarlal Sagar, (age 75) Dalit writer and publisher, Etawah on 12 May, 2008 at 11.00 am.

Reference Interview

Vijay Singh Chourasia interviewed Ram Singh, a Gihar caste person (age 70) who was child then Mahashya Bhikhulal started movement for their caste. (Interview was taken on 22 February, 2008 in Allahabad)

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